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Women writers: their works and ways

Catherine Jane Hamilton

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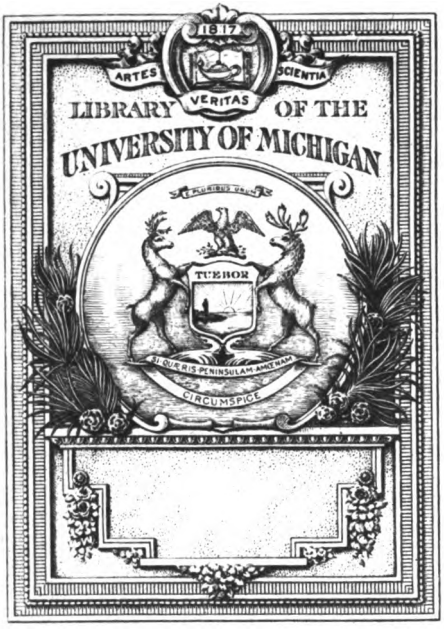

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WOMEN WRITERS.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1. **Marriage Bonds; or, Christian Hazell's Married Life.**
2. **The Flynns of Flynnville.**
3. **Dr. Belton's Daughter.**

WARD, LOCK, BOWDEN AND CO.

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MADAME DE STAEL.

BORN APRIL 22ND, 1765; DIED JULY 14TH, 1817.

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[illegible]EN WRITERS

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FIRST SERIES.

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PREFACE.

To tell the life-stories of some famous women writers—how they attained success, and how they enjoyed it—this is the object of these slight biographical sketches, which originally came out in a magazine (before the appearance of the "Eminent Women" Series), and are now revised and collected in a complete form. It is to be hoped that they will be found useful to many who have neither the time nor the opportunity to consult more elaborate works.

It is not amongst writers that the happiest women are generally found. An anonymous critic, writing of Fredrika Bremer, observed that "happy women do not write." Though this rule admits of many exceptions, still, in the main, it holds good. Happy women, whose hearts are satisfied and full, have little need of utterance. Their lives are rounded and complete, they require nothing but the calm recurrence of those peaceful home duties in which domestic women rightly feel that their true vocation lies.

All women, however, are not in this enviable position; all have not domestic circles and peaceful firesides. Many have to struggle against loneliness, poverty, depression, and monotony. And then the woman of genius, or even the woman who has only talent to depend on, turns gladly to an unknown public; she finds a voice with which to speak, and writes "something worthy the reading, and the world's delight." So it was with Caroline Norton, with Charlotte

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Brontë, with Fredrika Bremer, with Letitia Landon, with Felicia Hemans, and many others. Some, indeed, like Fanny Burney and Lady Morgan, seem to write from pure excess of vitality, from real gaiety of heart; we are amused and interested, but we are not touched to finer issues, not roused and stimulated as we are by Elisabeth Barrett Browning or by George Eliot. Others, like Harriet Martineau and Maria Edgeworth, have a distinct practical aim in view. They wish to bring out some useful lesson, to "point a moral" as well as "adorn a tale."

The first series of writers extends over a period of more than fifty years. They are the pioneers of the numerous authoresses of the present day. Early in the eighteenth century, Dean Swift, when writing to one of his lady correspondents, made the following caustic remarks: "Your sex employs more thought, memory, and application to be fools than would serve them to be wise and useful. When I reflect on this, I cannot conceive you to be human creatures, but a sort of species, hardly a degree above a monkey, who hath more diverting tricks than any of you, is an animal less mischievous and expensive, might, in time, be a tolerable critic in velvet and brocade, and, for aught I know, would equally become them." As the century went on, a new state of things set in. Women were no longer absorbed in cards and dress. Mary Wollstonecraft was battling for the rights of her sex, Mrs. Barbauld and Hannah More were writing poems, Joanna Baillie was composing tragedies, and Fanny Burney was sharpening her satirical little pen. It is with her name that we will begin.

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WOMEN WRITERS:
THEIR WORKS AND WAYS.

I.

FRANCES BURNEY (MADAME D'ARBLAY).

1752–1840.

Birth—Incidents of childhood—*Evelina* is commenced—Success pours in—Dr. Johnson's approbation—*The Witlings*—*Cecilia*—First introduction to George III.—Is offered a situation at Court—Wearisome days—Mrs. Schwellenberg's frogs—Resignation—Acquaintance and marriage with M. D'Arblay—*Camilla*—Widowhood, illness, and death.

THERE are few authoresses of whom we are able to know so much as Fanny Burney. In her delightful *Diary* she tells us all the little details of her life, of her sudden celebrity, of her visits at Streatham and Bath, of the people she met, the parties she went to, the compliments she was paid. The whole history flows easily from her fluent pen. Little oddities of odd people are set down with shrewd humour and dramatic force, that show how quick she was in seizing amusing situations, and in catching up the fire of wit and raillery which was passing around her. For people then were not too busy to be witty, and at Mr. Thrale's house at Streatham, Fanny Burney met the very flower of society—poets, critics, actors, beauties, all were glad to gather round the wealthy brewer's dinner-table and to be alternately petted and quizzed by his brilliant wife, that *piquante* little Hetty of whom Dr. Johnson once wrote—

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"Long may live my lovely Hetty!
Always young and always pretty,
Always pretty, always young,
Live my lovely Hetty long!"

In Miss Burney's *Diary*, even more than in her novels, we see how graphic her powers of narration are, how keenly observant she is, and what a gift of an easy, chatty style she has—a style that seems to be no style at all, but runs on like actual speech, always bright, vivid, and full of life. Even now, after more than a hundred years have passed, it reads as if it had been written yesterday. There is no stiffness, no affectation in it; it runs off glibly from the pen. What a relief to the elaborate, long-drawn sentences of Mrs. Montagu and Elizabeth Carter! Fanny Burney's sudden leap from obscurity to fame was one of the most amazing ever heard of in the history of literature. At one time she was only Dr. Burney's timid little daughter, bashful, even prudish, with no education but what she had given herself. Up two "pair of stairs," in a little play-room which contained the toys of the younger children, she scribbled away. In a few months—presto!—all was changed. She was the wonder of the day, the chosen friend and companion of Mrs. Thrale, invited by Sheridan to write a comedy, and caressed by ponderous Dr. Johnson, who declared that Richardson would have been afraid of her, and that Fielding never drew such a character as Mr. Smith, the Holborn beau. "Madam," said the doctor, "there is no character better drawn anywhere, in any book or by any author." Little Fanny, bashful as she was, evidently enjoyed her unexpected triumph. She draws back now and then, she colours whenever her book is mentioned, but a gleam of pleasure is in her merry eyes.

Frances Burney was the second daughter and third child of Dr. Burney, and was born at King's Lynn, in Norfolk, on the 13th of June, 1752. Her father had left London for a time, and had accepted the office of organist at Lynn. When Fanny was eight years old she did not know her letters, and

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her elder brother used to amuse himself by pretending to teach her to read, and giving her the book upside-down, which he declared she never found out. She was generally called the little dunce, though her mother always replied that she had no fear about Fanny. Beneath this apparent stupidity there was an undercurrent not only of deep feeling, but of shrewd observation. Her father relates that after having seen a play she used to take the actors off, and *compose* speeches for their characters. In company, she was silent, backward, and almost sheepish. From the age of eleven she was nicknamed by Dr. Burney's friends "the old lady."

Eight years after Fanny was born, Dr. Burney returned to London and took a house in Poland Street. Next door, in a private house, lived a wig-merchant who made wigs for the judges and barristers. The wig-maker's children and the little Burneys—James, Esther, Fanny, Susan, Charles, and Charlotte—used to play together in a small garden. Unfortunately, the door of the wig-magazine being left open, the children each seized one of these imposing head-ornaments, and danced and capered about, screaming at the ridiculous figure they cut. But, alas! one of the flaxen wigs, valued at ten guineas, fell into a tub of water, lost its buckle, and was declared to be totally spoiled. The wig-maker scolded loud and long, but little Fanny, the "old lady," advanced and said—"What signifies talking so much about an accident? The wig is wet, to be sure, and the wig was a good wig, to be sure, but 'tis no use to speak of it any more, because what's done can't be undone." After this stoical remark, "my little monkeys," says Dr. Burney, "were obliged to retreat without beat of drums or colours flying."

Mrs. Burney took some pains with her eldest daughter Esther; she read all Pope's works with her, while silent, observant Fanny listened, and learnt long passages by heart, merely from having heard her sister repeat them. But Mrs. Burney died in 1761, when Fanny was nine years old. She and her sister Susan had been sent to a boarding-school in

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Queen Square to be out of the way, and her grief was so intense that her governess said she had never seen a child with such acute feelings. Esther and Susan were now sent to a school in Paris, but no such advantages came to Fanny. Dr. Burney was afraid that her fondness for her grandmother, who was a Roman Catholic, might induce her to become one, so she was kept at home. At ten years old she had learnt to read and write, and she soon began to scribble short poems and sketches which no one could read but herself. She also studied the books in her father's library and made extracts, keeping a catalogue of all she went through. After Dr. Burney's return from Paris, where he went to bring his daughters from school, he married again. His choice was Mrs. Stephen Allen, the widow of a Lynn merchant, and the mother of several children, who had been playfellows of the young Burneys. The match caused general satisfaction. A large house was taken in Queen Square, so that all might reside under the same roof. The new Mrs. Burney was delighted at the musical and literary people that her husband had gathered round him. Dr. Hawkesworth, Arthur Young, Sir William Hamilton, Barretti, Mason the poet, Sir Robert and Lady Strange, Garrick, who could twist his flexible face into any shape, John Hutton the Moravian, Nollekens the sculptor, and many more, loved to spend their evenings with the genial doctor of music.

Fanny, like her sister-authoress, Madame de Staël, listened from her corner to the conversation of her elders, and took mental notes of their peculiarities. But the dearest and most loved of all friends was Mr. Crisp, whom the young Burneys called their Chesington daddy. He lived in an old-fashioned country place, Chesington House, near Kingston in Surrey. He had once written a play, *Virginia*, which had proved a failure, but he was not soured by his ill-success, and he liked to watch the young Burneys and to observe their different characters.

Fanny's love of shutting herself up in a garret with her

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scraps of paper, soon came to the knowledge of her step-mother. Mrs. Burney did not look at the little MSS., but she declaimed against the evils of scribbling and the folly and danger of being a female novel-writer. She so worked upon Fanny's sense of duty, that the fifteen-year-old authoress resolved one day to make a bonfire of all her manuscripts. This she did in a paved court, while her favourite sister Susan stood by weeping bitterly at the sacrifice. Amongst the papers was the *History of Caroline Evelyn* (the mother of Evelina). Though the fragment was burnt, Fanny could not escape from the idea of the singular adventures to which Caroline Evelyn's daughter might be exposed; on the one hand there would be high-born connections, on the other vulgar ones, so the whole story of *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, worked itself out before a word of it was committed to paper. Fanny was busy enough copying out her father's *History of Music*, which he was then working at. He published an Italian tour, which Fanny had copied, and he then set off for Germany to collect further materials for his history. During his absence, Fanny could not resist writing down the first part of *Evelina*. She wrote it in an upright feigned hand, fearing lest some compositor might recognise her hand-writing to be the same as that of the *History of Music*, and thus her secret would be discovered. She got tired after she had finished the first two volumes, and wrote an anonymous letter to Dodsley, the publisher, offering it to him, and promising to send the concluding volume the following year. The answer was to be addressed to a coffee-house. But Dodsley refused to look at anything anonymous, and the next step was to try Mr. Lowndes, a bookseller in the City. After he had seen the MS. he wrote to say that he could not publish an unfinished book, but that when it was completed, he would be ready to purchase and print it. Fanny did not like this very reasonable condition, and another year passed by before the third volume was finished. During this time, her conscience began

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to smite her whether she ought not to tell her father of this "secret little work"; she did stammer out something about it, but Dr. Burney only laughed loudly, treated the idea as an absurdity, and never even asked the name of the book. In a few days the packet was sent to Mr. Lowndes, who offered twenty pounds for it. The offer was accepted with "alacrity and boundless surprise at its magnificence."

In January, 1778, *Evelina* was published, when Fanny Burney was in her twenty-sixth year. Her Journal now tells its own tale; it tells how her aunt Anne and Miss Humphries being settled at Brompton, she was going thither to tea, when Charlotte acquainted her that they were then employed in reading *Evelina* to her invalid cousin Richard. This news fell like a clap of thunder. *Evelina* was to be kept a most profound secret, and now Fanny foresaw a thousand dangers from discovery, and more than all she feared the indiscreet warmth of her *confidantes*. She grew quite sick with apprehension, so much so that her sister Susan had to go to Brompton by herself. But on Susan's return, she assured Fanny that there was not the slightest suspicion of the author, and that they had all concluded *Evelina* to be the work of a *man!* Fanny thinking herself quite safe, went off to Brompton the next day, and arrived in the middle of the reading out. "How pretty that is!" exclaimed Miss Humphries, as she finished Mr. Villar's letter of consolation on Sir John Belmont's rejection of his daughter. Fanny was on the point of bowing her head and saying, "You are really very good," but she got off unsuspected, and to her utter amazement, the readers guessed the author to be Anstey, who wrote the *Bath Guide*.

At Chesington, with her friend Daddy Crisp, she resolved to have a little quiet sport. She told him that *Evelina* was a book which Hetty (her sister) had taken to Brompton to divert her cousin Richard. Mr. Crisp asked a number of unlucky questions, such as if it were reckoned clever, what Fanny thought of it, and if folks laughed at it. At length,

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he desired her to begin reading it to him. Her voice faltered so much, that to her thinking, the book lost all manner of spirit. But Mr. Crisp grew greedily eager to go on with it. Fanny, however, determined to leave Hetty to finish the third volume, and pretended that she had not brought it. When Mrs. Burney, who was not in the secret, came to Chesington with her stepdaughter Susan, Mr. Crisp cried out—"O pray, Susette, do send us the second volume of *Evelina*. Fanny brought me the first on purpose to tantalize me."

"My mother," says Fanny, "instantly darted forward and repeated, '*Evelina!* what's that, pray?'"

"Again I jolted Mr. Crisp, who, very much perplexed, said in a boggling manner that it was a novel, he supposed, from the circulating library—only a trumpery novel."

"'Ah, my dear daddy!' thought I, 'you would have devised some other speech if you knew all;' but he really was at a loss, as well he might be, to know what I wanted him to say."

Evelina had been published six months before Dr. Burney saw it. He first read an account of it in the *Monthly Review*, then the book itself was sent for. When he read the introductory ode the tears started into his eyes; and now he, with Lady Hales and Miss Coussmaker, sat down to read it diligently through. Dr. Burney's verdict was as follows:—

"Upon my word I think it is the best novel I know, excepting Fielding's, and in some respects *better* than his. The language is as good as anybody need write, I declare as good as I could wish to read. . . . *Evelina* is in a new style, so perfectly innocent and natural, and the scene between her and her father, Sir John Belmont, is a scene for a tragedy. I blubbered at it, and Lady Hales and Miss Coussmaker are not yet recovered from hearing it. It makes them quite ill; it is indeed wrought up in a most extraordinary manner."

Praise flowed in from all sides, and was duly reported to Fanny. Dr. Johnson's approbation almost "crazed" her;

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it gave her such a flight of spirits that she danced a jig to Mr. Crisp without any preparation, music, or explanation, to his no small amazement and diversion.

"My dear, dear Dr. Johnson," she writes in her Journal, "what a charming man you are! and Mrs. Cholmondley too. I am not merely prepared, but determined, to admire her. But Mrs. Thrale, she, she is the goddess of my idolatry. What an *éloge* is hers!" Again she says—"I often think, when I am counting up my laurels, what a pity it would have been if I had popped off in my last illness without knowing what a person of consequence I was." She says she is standing on the summit of a high hill, one side glowing bright and beautiful, the other full of caverns, gulfs, and precipices. Mr. Crisp was still kept in the dark about the author of *Evelina*. He was told to guess, and at last he said to Fanny, "I can't guess; maybe it's *you*." "Pooh, nonsense!" cried she; "what would make you think of me?" "Why, you look guilty," he answered. Then he guessed Dr. Burney, Mrs. Thrale, and at last Fanny suggested that it was written by a son of the late Dr. Friend. "He is capable of that or of anything else," said Mr. Crisp, and Fanny grinned broader than before. Such scenes were of daily occurrence. "Ain't you sorry this sweet book is done?" asked Mrs. Gast, Mr. Crisp's sister, of sly Fanny. A silly little laugh was the answer. "Ah!" said Patty, "'tis the sweetest book. Don't you think so, Miss Burney?" Answer as before. "Pray, Miss Fan," says Mrs. Hamilton, "who wrote it?" "Really I never heard."

"'Cute enough," adds Fanny triumphantly to her confidante sister. But every day detection was coming nearer. Dr. Burney at length told Mrs. Thrale (who had recommended *Evelina* to him) that it was written, not by a "man of great abilities," but really and truly by "our Fanny!" Her consternation was unbounded. Horace Walpole had been suspected as the author, but no one had ever dreamt of quiet Fanny Burney. She was now invited to Streatham,

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the most "consequential day she had ever spent since her birth." All the way she was in the fidgets, fearing the Thrales would expect a less awkward and backward person than they would find her. Mrs. Thrale went to meet her and her father, and soon began on the ever-new subject of *Evelina*, and told how Dr. Johnson could repeat whole scenes by heart. They had a "noble dinner and an elegant dessert."

Soon after they sat down, Dr. Johnson, with his strange contortions of hands, lips, feet, and knees, came in, and was put next to Fanny. In the middle of dinner he asked Mrs. Thrale what was in some little pies that was near him. "Mutton," answered she; "so I don't ask you to eat any because I know you despise it." "No, madam, no," he cried, "I despise nothing that is good of its kind, but I am too proud to eat of it. Sitting next Miss Burney makes me very proud to-day."

As if this was not enough from the greatest critic of the age, he told a story, and ended by saying, "Madame Duval could not have done a grosser thing." This delicacy of "dear Dr. Johnson" never mentioning the book, and yet showing that he thought one of the characters lifelike, delighted Fanny. She also heard that Sir Joshua Reynolds had sat up all night to finish *Evelina*. She went home with her head nearly turned; she had found Mrs. Thrale all "good-humour, sense, spirits, and agreeability." Mr. Crisp was now told the secret. "You little hussy," he cried, "ain't you ashamed to look me in the face? Young Friend, indeed! You Evelina, you, what tricks you have served me!" He said Lowndes would have made an estate if he had given £1,000 for the book, and that he ought not have given less. The visits to Streatham now became frequent, and Fanny was made the *enfant gâtée* of the house and Dr. Johnson's especial pet. The great man unbent in that friendly circle, and was loved even more than he was feared. Once he seated himself on a sofa, and, calling Fanny, said, "Come, Evelina, come and sit by me."

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"I obeyed," she says, and he took me almost in his arms —that is, one of his arms, for one of them would go three times round me at least—and, half-laughing, half-serious, he charged me to be a good girl. "But, my dear," he continued, "what makes you so fond of the Scotch? I don't like you for that. I hate those Scotch, and so must you. I must not have you so fond of the Scotch, little Burney. Make your hero what you like, but not a Scotchman."

Another day, after gazing steadfastly at this "sly young rogue, this character-monger," as he called her, he burst out with, "Yes, it's very handsome." "What, sir?" cried Fanny, amazed. "Why, your cap. I have looked at it for some time and I like it much. It has not that vile bandeau across it that I have so often cursed."

Near-sighted as the great critic was, he made himself a judge of ladies' dress, and gave a certain Miss Brown no peace about her "vile cap." Once he cried to Mrs. Burney, who was going to church in a linen jacket, "Why, madam, this won't do; you must not go to church so." His great delight was to pit his favourite Fanny against the learned Mrs. Montagu, the "queen of the blues," who came on a visit to Streatham. "Down with her! down with her!" cried the doctor. "Attack her! fight her! Down with her at once! You are a rising wit, and she is at the top, so at her, Burney, and down with her!" Fanny was not without her share of good looks; in her picture, painted in the huge black velvet hat of that day, we see that she had a bright piquancy in her eyes and a comic mockery about her mouth, which made her more than pretty.

Urged by Sheridan, and by a certain Mr. Murphy, who was well up in stage matters, she began a play called *The Witlings*. She had got on some way when Mr. Crisp pronounced against it; he said it would injure her reputation, and would remind everybody of Molière's *Femmes Savantes*, which, strange to say, she had never read. So the fatal "knell was knolled," and after a "hissing, groaning, cat-

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calling epistle which the two daddies concocted, 'down among the dead men,'" says poor Fanny, "sink the poor *Witlings* for ever, and for ever, and for ever. I won't be mortified," she adds bravely, "and I won't be *downed*, but I will be proud to find that I have out of my own family a friend who loves me well enough to speak plain truth."

It is very probable that Mr. Crisp's own failure made him over-cautious about his pet, who at this time of her life had so much vigour and spirit that anything she wrote could hardly be dull. It is a pity that *The Witlings* did not run its chance; if it had done so perhaps some of the personages —Mrs. Sapient, Mr. Dabbler, Lady Smatter, Mrs. Voluble, and that "great oaf Bobby"—might have been household words on the stage to this day. In visits to Brighton (Brighthelmstone, as it was then called) and to Bath in company with the Thrales, Fanny forgot her disappointment. At the Pump-room she saw the beautiful Miss Ditcher, Richardson's granddaughter, and was introduced to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, whom she calls "a noble-looking woman."

Everywhere she went she heard praises of her sweet book; parts of it were quoted to her, and Miss Braughton's speech, "Only think, Polly, miss has danced with a lord!" was repeated again and again as if it were quite irresistible.

Fanny Burney was now busily gathering materials for her next work, *Cecilia*. During the year 1781, she worked hard at it. It was written under very different circumstances from *Evelina*. It was seen in the rough by Mr. Crisp, who corrected it, and was always telling Fanny that she had so much to lose that she could not be too careful. In many respects *Cecilia* is an advance on *Evelina*. *Evelina* has certainly all the vigour of a first work, but the comic situations and the absurdity of Madame Duval, Captain Mirvan, and the Braughtons are what keep it afloat. The story, too, has the disadvantage of being told in letters, which is always an awkward device. This fault is not found in *Cecilia*. Miss Burney had learnt more of her art. The conflict between love and pride in

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young Delville, who, in marrying the rich heiress, Cecilia, is bound to take her plebeian name and lose his own, is capitally imagined ; while Mr. Briggs, the City man, bent on saving money, is a character which might have been painted by Hogarth. Miss Burney, as usual, loves strong contrasts. The aristocratic Mrs. Delville and her husband are purposely put beside Mr. Briggs, to show the difference between high-bred prejudices of rank and a vulgar love of wealth. Then we have a dreamy enthusiast and a reckless bankrupt to add colour to the picture.

The success of *Cecilia* was triumphant. Mrs. Thrale's eyes were red with crying and reading. "I stop," she says, "every minute to kiss the book and to wish it was my Burney." Edmund Burke wrote a high-flown epistle in which he calls *Cecilia* an extraordinary performance, and says that the arrogance of age must submit to be taught by youth. It was no wonder that Mr. Crisp should warn his "Fannikin" not to be intoxicated with success. She had, indeed, opened out a new style of novel-writing ; and had shown that women could study human nature with even more delicacy and penetration than men. Her people are not tragedy kings and queens, not Sir Charles Grandisons or impossible heroes of romance. They are moved by common passions ; some of them are vulgar, impertinent, silly, miserly, morose ; they are not wax-work figures, not copies of copies, but real human beings. Fanny Burney as a novelist may be compared with Molière as a dramatist ; with her, comedy was always first, and pathos next.

Soon after *Cecilia* was published—in 1782—she went to a party at Miss Monckton's (afterwards Lady Cork), who lived with her mother, the Dowager Lady Galway, in a "noble" house in Charles Street. Here Fanny met Edmund Burke face to face, and heard him speak in eloquent praise of *Cecilia*. He told her that she had done wonders in winning over the "old wits," particularly Mrs. Delany and the Duchess of Portland. "At the close of the evening," says

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the timid, flattered authoress, "old Lady Galway trotted from her corner, and leaning her hands upon the backs of two chairs, put her little round head through fine-dressed ladies on purpose to peep at *me*. Ha! ha!" An introduction to Mrs. Delany by Mrs. Chapone soon followed, and Fanny was delighted with the courtly, gracious old lady. Her acquaintance with Mrs. Delany formed new ties just as the old ones were dissolved, for in one year (1784) she lost her Chesington daddy, Mrs. Thrale married again, to the intense disgust of her friends, and Dr. Johnson, loved and revered, died in Bolt Court. Mrs. Delany seemed to fill up the gaps in Fanny's heart. The old lady was an especial favourite with King George III. and Queen Charlotte. After the death of her friend the Duchess of Portland, they took a house for her at Windsor, and furnished it not only with plate, china, and glass, but even with wine, sweetmeats, and pickles. During Fanny's visit, she breathed a new atmosphere—the atmosphere of Royalty. She describes her first interview with the King so inimitably, that we must give her own words. The persons present were Mr. Dewes, his little daughter, Miss P., Mrs. Delany, and Fanny herself:—

"The door of the drawing-room," she says, "was again opened, and a large man in deep mourning appeared at it. A ghost could not have scared me more when I discovered by the glitter of the star on the black, that it was the King. The general disorder had prevented his being seen except by myself, till Miss P., turning round exclaimed, 'The King, aunt! the King!' 'Oh mercy!' thought I, 'that I were but out of the room! which way shall I escape? and how pass him unnoticed? There is but the single door by which he entered the room.' Every one scampered out of the way, Miss P. to stand next the door, Mr. Bernard Dewes to a corner opposite to it; his little girl clung to me, and Mrs. Delany advanced to meet His Majesty. I had now retreated to the wall, and purposed gliding softly out of the room,

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but before I had taken a single step, the King in a loud whisper to Mrs. Delany said, 'Is that Miss Burney?' On her answering 'Yes, sir,' he bowed and came close up to me."

One question, "How long was it since she had come back?" contented him this time, and then he returned to talk to Mrs. Delany, while the quartet of listeners stood in the four corners of the room, the King in the middle, reminding Fanny of the game of "puss-in-the-corner." Every minute she says she expected to hear "Puss! puss!" and to change places with her neighbour. But the King had not done with her yet. He inquired if she drew. "I believe not, sir," answered Mrs. Delany; "at least she does not tell." "Oh," cried he, laughing, "that is nothing. She never does tell. Her father told me the whole history of *Evelina*." Then, coming up, he said, "But what, what? how was it?" "Sir!" cried poor Fanny, not well understanding him. "How came you? How happened it? What? what?" "I—I only wrote, sir, for my own amusement, only in some odd idle hours." "But your publishing, your printing? How was that?" "That was only, sir——" After much hesitation and stammering, during which the King put in his perpetual "Eh? what?" poor Fanny at last managed to say, "I thought, sir, that it would look well in print." After this lame answer, a regular catechism followed as to how she got *Evelina* printed, who were her *confidantes*, who betrayed her, and the King was much amused when he was told that Baretti had laid a wager that *Evelina* must be written by a man, for a woman could never have kept her own counsel.

The Queen now came in, and a new martyrdom began. Her Majesty took a fancy to Fanny, who called herself on this occasion "a sober, solemn, decent mute." The Queen inquired if they were to have nothing more from her pen. "There is a power to do so much good," she said, "and good to young people, which is so very good a thing that I cannot help wishing it could be."

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Fanny now met the Royal couple frequently, and became used to the King's everlasting "What? what?" In spite of her fervent loyalty she could not help seeing the ridiculous side of these interviews, and drew up "Directions for Coughing, Sneezing, or Moving before the King and Queen:"—

"In the first place, you must not cough. If you find a cough tickling in your throat you must arrest it from making any sound. If you find yourself choking from the forbearance you must choke, but not cough. In the second place, you must not sneeze. If you have a vehement cold you must take no notice of it. If your nose membranes feel a great irritation, you must hold your breath. If a sneeze still insists upon making its way, you must oppose it by grinding your teeth together. If the violence of the repulse breaks some blood-vessel, you must break the blood-vessel, but not sneeze. In the third place, you must not on any account move hand or foot. If by chance a black pin runs into your hand you must not take it out. If the pain is very great you must be sure to bear it without flinching. If it brings the tears into your eyes you must not wipe them off. If they give you a tingling by running down your cheeks, you must look as if nothing was the matter," &c., &c.

When Miss Burney was writing down these directions for her dearest Esther's amusement she little knew how familiar she would soon become with the restraints of a Court. In May, 1786, Madame Hagedorn, the Keeper of the Queen's Robes, resigned, and the situation was offered to Miss Burney! Of all the people in the world the "sweet Queen" selected her; firstly, she was led to think of her by her books, then by seeing her, then by always hearing how she was loved by her friends, and lastly by her friendship for Mrs. Delany. Good qualifications for a companion, but not for an upper servant, and this was what poor Fanny was

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doomed to be. It was like putting a racehorse to draw a waggon. Because Miss Burney was the first female novelist of the day, she was therefore fitted to assist at the Queen's toilette; according to this argument, because a horse has won the Derby it is therefore fitted to draw turnips. Miss Burney gained little by the step—apartments in the Palace, to have a footman kept for her, and to have £200 a year. She did not look forward to her promotion with much delight, but "everybody congratulates me," she says, "so violently that it seems as if it was all gain. My dear father is in raptures." Alas! unwise, unthinking Dr. Burney, who seemed to imagine that the neighbourhood of Royalty was the seventh heaven of bliss. All the pleasant visits to Norbury and Twickenham must be given up. "I am married," said poor Fanny to her dearest Susan. "I was averse to forming the union, and I endeavoured to escape from it, but the knot is tied."

A worse Keeper of the Robes could hardly have been found. She was timid, near-sighted, and when she arrived with her father at the Queen's Lodge at Windsor (July 17, 1786) she was in a perfect tremor of body and mind. A cross, selfish German, Mrs. Schwellenberg, was to be her coadjutrix. After being received by the Queen in her dressing-room, Fanny dined with Mrs. Schwellenberg and a German officer, and then there was tea, at which four gentlemen, including the Bishop of Salisbury and a certain Major Price, appeared. After this evening, Miss Burney's servitude began in good earnest. She rose at six, and was called to the Queen soon after seven; no maid entered the room while the Queen was in it. Mrs. Thielcke, a German, handed the things to Miss Burney, and she put them on. "'Tis fortunate for me," she writes, "that I have not the handing them; I should never know which to take first, and should run a prodigious risk of giving the hoop before the gown, and the fan before the neckerchief." By eight o'clock the Queen was dressed, and Miss Burney returned to

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MISS BURNEY IN ATTENDANCE ON THE ROYAL FAMILY.

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her room for breakfast. She took a book for her companion, and allowed herself an hour over it. At nine o'clock, she made preparations for dress. Fresh toilettes were required for Court days, for the birthdays of the Royal Family, for Kew, where the dress was plainest, and for Windsor, where it was merely required to be "neat but not inelegant, and moderately fashionable." From ten till a quarter to twelve, she either wrote letters or walked. At a quarter to one, the Queen dressed for the day; Mrs. Schwellenberg, as well as Mrs. Thielcke and Miss Burney, attended, and the hair-dresser powdered and raised up the mighty edifice of cushions and ornaments then in vogue. It was generally three o'clock before Miss Burney was free, and she had then two clear hours to herself before dinner at five, but she was so jaded in body and mind that writing was a trouble. She did, indeed, begin a tragedy which could not have made very rapid progress. Between eleven and twelve at night, came her last summons to the Queen; twenty minutes or half-an-hour was spent with her, and then at last came rest. Worn out from early rising and a long tiresome day, she fell asleep the moment she laid down her head.

It was some time before she could get reconciled to be summoned by *a bell*. It called the proud flush to her cheeks, in spite of the condescension of the sweet Queen and the elegant civilities of the royal Princesses. One of her strange duties was to mix or "cook" a very fine scented and mild snuff for the Queen, and this snuff was pronounced to be very well mixed. She also had to take care of the Queen's little favourite dog, Badini, and the Princess Sophia came herself for the dog's basket. Sometimes there were pleasant chats with the King's equerries over their tea, and one of them, Colonel Goldsworthy, gave an amusing account of the drudgery he had to go through. "After all the labours of the chase, all the riding, the trotting, the galloping, from eight in the morning till five or six in the afternoon, home we come, looking like drowned rats, with not a dry thread

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about us, and not a morsel within us; and then, after all this, what follows? 'Here, Goldsworthy,' cries His Majesty, 'will you have a little barley-water?' Barley-water after a hard day's hunting!" And then Fanny is warned of the blasts from the garden-door, from the Queen's room, from the King's stairs. "Don't go to early prayers in November," adds Colonel Goldsworthy; "that will completely kill you. The Princesses, used to it as they are, get regularly knocked up; off they drop, one by one. First the Queen deserts us, then Princess Elizabeth is done for, then Princess Royal begins coughing, then Princess Augusta gets the snuffles, and all the poor attendants drop off one after another like so many snuffs of candles, till at last dwindle, dwindle, dwindle—not a soul goes to chapel but the King, the parson, and myself, and there we freeze it out together."

The dreary round of monotonous duties, the change of the Court from Windsor to Kew, and from Windsor to St. James's, the dinners with the equerries, and the chats with Mrs. Delany, went on month after month. At one time, a visit to Oxford was proposed, and Mrs. Schwellenberg was much amazed when Miss Burney was not enraptured at being told that "as she was poor, the Queen intended giving her a new gown." Fanny replied with some spirit that she had a "new Chambéry gauze" for the occasion. The long day at Oxford, beginning at six in the morning (for at six the hairdresser arrived), was anything but a day of joy. A collation was prepared for their Majesties at Christ Church College, but none for their attendants, and it was not till six or seven o'clock in the evening that they got tea, coffee, and bread-and-butter. "Poor Miss Burney!" cried the good-natured Duchess of Ancaster, "I wish she could sit down. She does not know what it is to stand for five hours following as we do."

The trial of Warren Hastings made some excitement in the dreary Court life. Miss Burney attended at Westminster Hall every day, and eagerly took the part of Hastings. She

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could hardly bring herself to speak civilly to Edmund Burke, who led the attack against him. Then came Court visits to Cheltenham and Gloucester, and sometimes pleasant chats with a certain Mr. Fairly, who read Akenside's poems aloud to her in her sitting-room. The King's delirium, which burst out suddenly at dinner, fell like a thunderbolt on the Royal attendants ; the Queen's distress was pitiable to witness, and the Court shortly afterwards removed to the quiet of Kew. When the King had almost recovered, he chanced to see Miss Burney in the distance ; he chased her round some gravel-paths, and his delight was so great at meeting a familiar face that he kissed her !

Meantime, Mrs. Schwellenberg's temper was getting worse and worse. "No," cried she, "I won't have nothing what you call romances, what you call novels, what you call histories. I might not read such—what you call—stuff, not I !" The brilliant author of *Evelina* was compelled to keep company with this stupid, half-educated German, who insisted on keeping all the windows open when she went out driving, let the weather be as cold and bleak as it might. Poor Fanny might well cry, "Oh, were there no Mrs. Schwellenberg !" She got inflammation in her eyes from the sharp winds, and though a charitable equerry, Mr. De Luc, took pity and shut down the window, it was immediately opened by Mrs. Schwellenberg, who remarked, "How did the poor Hagedorn bear it when the blood was all running down from her eyes ?"

With all this to endure, with long vigils when Miss Burney watched the sun rise, and tedious toilettes which she resolved to spell without the last *tes* to save time, it was sorry comfort for the sweet Queen to make her a present of a writing-desk, or to ask her for some verses in praise of a feminine garment called a "great-coat." But still laughter was not quite banished from Fanny's merry heart. She could enjoy a joke about Mrs. Schwellenberg's pet frogs, though perhaps tears were not far from her own eyes. "Do

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you know, Colonel Gwyn," said one of the equerries, "Mrs. Schwellenberg keeps a pair of frogs?" "Of frogs? Pray what do they feed on?" "Flies, sir." "And pray, madam, what food have they in winter?" "Nothing other. I can make them croak when I will. When I only go so to my snuffbox—knock! knock! knock! they croak all what I please. Now I have told you all this you might tell something to me. I have talked enoff. Now you might amuse me."

After the King's recovery came a general thanksgiving, and when he went to Weymouth for sea-bathing he had no sooner popped his Royal head under the water than a band of music, concealed in a neighbouring machine, struck up, "God save great George our King!" After a visit to Exeter, poor Miss Burney's powers of endurance fast gave way. Sleeplessness, constant pain in her face and side, had reduced her to a shadow of her former self. Bark and opium had no effect, and "deadly dead" sank her heart as she went to Mrs. Schwellenberg. At length she was compelled to resign, July 7, 1791, after a servitude of five long years. Rest and change did wonders for her. Once, for two days, when her successor, Mademoiselle Jacobi, was ill, she returned to her old duties at the Queen's Lodge, and felt the old languor and exhaustion creeping on again.

During her country visits to her sister, Susan Phillips, she met a great number of French emigrants, and amongst them M. D'Arblay, adjutant of M. Lafayette. Miss Burney considered her future husband "one of the most delightful characters I ever met with, for openness, probity, intellectual knowledge, and unhackneyed manners. He is tall and a good figure, with an open and manly countenance." "Here I am, madam," he said, "reduced to nothing except a little ready money, and very little of that." At Mickleham Miss Burney also met Madame de Staël, and thought her the most charming person (to use the great Corinne's own phrase) "that never I saw." Madame de Staël wrote

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a letter to Miss Burney, and addressed it, "À la première femme d'Angleterre" ("to the first woman in England"). There is something very naïve in this production, given exactly as it was written: "When I learned to read english," she said, "I began by milton, to know all or renounce all at once. I follow the same system in writing my first english letter to miss burney, after such an enterprise nothing can affright me." Meanwhile, M. D'Arblay was busy teaching Miss Burney French, and she was teaching him English. The end of it was that they agreed to risk matrimony together, though he had nothing, and she had only £100 a year retiring pension from the Queen. The marriage took place the 31st of July, 1793, in Mickleham Church, and on the 1st of August, the ceremony was re-performed according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. "M. D'Arblay," says his wife, "has a taste for literature and a passion for reading and writing as marked as my own." They began their modest housekeeping at a place called Hermitage, and in 1794 an infant son, Alexander Charles Louis, was born. The year afterwards a tragedy of Madame D'Arblay's, *Edwy and Elgiva*, was performed, but though Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble took part in it, it fell terribly flat.

Madame D'Arblay had prescribed for herself a system of rigid self-denial, which, she wrote to her sister, "would make you laugh, or perhaps cry, to hear." For several years, she, her husband, and child lived on an income which did not exceed £125. It was during these straitened circumstances that she withdrew a comedy, *Love and Fashion*, at the request of her father, though the manager of Covent Garden had offered £400 for it. She always seemed ready to give up her own will to please others. She now announced a new work, in six volumes, to be published by subscription. This was *Camilla*, which she had sketched out during those dreary hours at Windsor. She gives an amusing account of how she brought this new work to the Queen. Her head was dressed, and M. D'Arblay helped her to carry

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the six books as far as the gate. The Queen received her graciously, and of course the King wanted to know all about the new volumes, where and when they were begun, &c. The lovely Princess Augusta chatted away to Madame D'Arblay alone "with a gaiety and charm that is quite resistless." The Queen sent a packet to the author of *Camilla* containing a hundred guineas. "'Tis only for the paper," she said; "nothing for the trouble." One day, Madame D'Arblay brought her little Alex in a new muslin frock and sash to be introduced to the Queen, who had a Noah's ark ready displayed for him, but the little rebel struggled to a Tunbridge ware workbox, and seizing what he called a hammer, began knocking the table with it. Then he ran into their Majesties' bedroom, in which were all the jewels ready to take to St. James's. At last the Queen said, "Perhaps he is hungry," and cakes being produced, little Alex nodded his head and said, "Sankey, Queen."

A cottage was bought with the proceeds of *Camilla*, and called Camilla Cottage. Here Madame D'Arblay lived happily with her two precious Alexanders. "The sale of *Camilla*," she wrote to her father, "is truly astonishing. Clarke has just sent to say that 800 only remain out of an edition of 4,000."

But though *Camilla* might sell, it did not add to the author's reputation, and has long ago sunk into oblivion. Whether from French influences or not, Madame D'Arblay's style had become thoroughly vitiated. She had lost all that ease and lightness which had been the principal charm of her early books, and she was now perpetually aiming at fine writing and long, stilted sentences. M. D'Arblay went to Paris to settle about his retiring pension, and at Passy his wife and child joined him. There they spent twelve years. During this time Madame D'Arblay was threatened with cancer, and bore a painful operation so well that she was called *l'ange*.

On her way to Dunkirk her MS. of *The Wanderer* was

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on the point of being seized by the Custom House officers. *The Wanderer* was published in 1814, but never attained any fame. Then came Dr. Burney's death and the Restoration of the French Royal Family. M. D'Arblay was placed by the Duke of Luxemburg in the French Garde du Corps. His wife was at Brussels during the battle of Waterloo, and in a state of trouble and anxiety about his safety. Some years afterwards, General D'Arblay returned to England, and died, to the intense grief of his wife, on the 3rd of May, 1819. "I fear I have been too happy," he said. "Je ne sais si ce sera le dernier mot, mais ce sera la dernière pensée, notre réunion." His sorrowing wife survived "the delight, the pride, the happiness of her heart," for many years. Her son took high honours at Cambridge, and became a clergyman, but he died of influenza the 19th of January, 1837. His mother was now left quite alone. "I would ask you to read me" [from St. John's Gospel], she said to her friend on her deathbed, "but I could not understand one syllable; but I thank God my mind has not waited till this time." Soon after she said, "I have had some sleep." "That is well," was the answer; "you wanted rest." "I shall have it soon, my dear," and so she breathed her last the 6th of January, 1840, in her eighty-eighth year. The last thing she wrote was a memoir of her father, but it contains the worst faults of her later style, and was universally condemned. Sir Walter Scott mentions having met her at Bath, "an elderly lady with no remains of personal beauty, but with simple and gentle manners, pleasing expression of countenance, and apparently quick feelings." This meeting between the two authors is very interesting. Both were founders of new schools. Sir Walter created the historical romance, and brought the past down to the present. Madame D'Arblay created the modern school, with all its perplexities and intricacies. It would be well if all her sisterhood were as gentle, as loving, as modest, and as unselfish as she was.

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II.

MRS. INCHBALD.

1753–1821.

Birth—Impatience of a country life—Love for the stage—Escape to London—Marriage with Mr. Inchbald—On tour in the provinces—Struggles and doubts—Widowhood—First appearance at Covent Garden—The *Simple Story*—Characters and plot—Retirement from the stage—Petty economies—Knocking about in lodgings—"Description of me"—Apathy—Interview with Madame de Staël—Illness and death.

"TRUTH is stranger than fiction" was never better proved than in the case of Mrs. Inchbald. What contrasts of light and shade, what curious ups and downs, are to be found in the career of this authoress, who has given us in her *Simple Story* one of the most remarkable novels ever written, and which still survives the dust of years! Elizabeth Simpson was born on the 15th of October, 1753, just a year after Fanny Burney. Her parents, John and Mary Simpson, were Roman Catholics, and held a small farm at Standingfield, near Bury St. Edmunds. Though they had only just enough to make the two ends meet, they were thoroughly respected by their richer neighbours, many of whom were Catholics like themselves. Their children—six girls and two boys—were remarkable for beauty, and Elizabeth was the most beautiful of all. No great sum was laid out on education; the Simpson girls, especially, owed more to their natural quickness than to any care that was given to their learning. "It is astonishing," observes Elizabeth, "how

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MRS. ELIZABETH INCHBALD.

BORN OCTOBER 16TH, 1753; DIED AUGUST 1ST, 1821.

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much all girls are inclined to literature to what boys are. My brothers went to school seven years and could never spell. I and two of my sisters, though we were never taught, could spell from our infancy." Elizabeth was not quite eight years old when her father died. Four of her sisters and one of her brothers married a few years afterwards, and the widow, with her son George and her two unmarried daughters, remained in possession of the farm. Mrs. Simpson had little love for butter and cheese making; her tastes led her to constant theatre-going. The stage then filled the place which novel-reading now supplies; every petty provincial town had its company of actors and its plays, which were acted by the dim light of candles, and which were loudly applauded by the country folks, who jolted along the muddy roads in waggons to enjoy their only excitement. The business of the farm at Standingfield was deserted for the theatre at Bury. The three young Simpsons loved acting quite as much as their mother; they all diligently attended every play, and even rehearsal, so that the ins and outs of the stage became more familiar to them than baking, brewing, or churning. The actors and actresses of the little town were looked up to—almost worshipped—and after the "high and gaudy" days of the year were over, and the "stars" had departed, the family amusement consisted of reading aloud the scenes which had been enjoyed so keenly. The natural course of events soon followed. The unmarried son, George, left the farm for the stage, and Elizabeth, beautiful and ambitious, longed to face the footlights. From her childhood she had pined under the dull monotony of Standingfield. Before reaching the age of thirteen she frequently declared that she would "rather die than live any longer without seeing the world." This impatience of country life never left her. She might have exclaimed in good earnest—

> "A house is much more to my taste than a tree,
> And for groves—oh! a fine grove of chimneys for me."

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She could enjoy the voluntary solitude of London lodgings, but she hated the forced loneliness of fields and woods. During her later years a friend suggested that she might live much more cheaply and conveniently farther away from London. She answered, with a shuddering horror at the thought, "*Never!* nothing happens in the country. There's such a *noise of nothing* in the country." With her intense anxiety to see the world, her hatred of country life, and her eager desire to find some outlet for her burning energies, Standingfield seemed to her like a prison from which she longed to escape. Her resolution to follow her brother's example and take to the stage, was soon fixed. But a formidable obstacle stood in the way. She had a most perplexing impediment in her speech. To conquer this she now set herself. She wrote down all the words that she found most difficult to say. She carried them constantly about with her, and by repeating them over and over again, she succeeded in getting the better of her hesitation to such an extent that theatrical success did not seem quite impossible. In the month of April, 1770, her brother George began his career on the stage, and in the same year Elizabeth, then under seventeen, wrote to Mr. Griffiths, the manager of the Norwich and Bury companies, to request an engagement for herself. Her application was, for the time, refused, though several letters passed between them. For Mr. Griffiths, who was the principal actor of his troupe, Elizabeth had a romantic feeling; her imagination, all quivering with youth and life, converted him into a hero. In her pocket-book for the year, she printed the letters of his name in large Roman capitals, and underneath she wrote, "Each dear letter of that name is harmony." The following year she paid her first visit to London, and remained a month with her sister, Mrs. Hunt. All her married sisters lived in London, and all retained the family love for the stage. Elizabeth, just eighteen, tall and slender, with hair of a golden auburn, lovely hazel eyes, perfect features, and an enchanting countenance, was thrown

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into society which chiefly consisted of second-rate actors and actresses. Among them was Mr. Inchbald, a well-known provincial actor, nearly twenty years older than the fair Elizabeth. He was at once smitten by her charms, and she liked him well enough to promise to correspond with him. But she would not marry—"at least, not yet." "In spite of your eloquent pen," she prudently wrote to him, "matrimony still appears to me with less charms than terrors; the bliss arising from it is, I doubt not, superior to any other, but best not to be ventured till some little time have proved the emptiness of all other, which it seldom fails to do." She hoped that Heaven would preserve her from such indiscretion as a hasty marriage. Perhaps she was a little influenced by her romantic fancy for Mr. Griffiths. The following extract from her pocket-book shows how her mind vibrated between the two :—

1772.

Jan. 22. Saw Mr. Griffiths' picture.
,, 28. Stole it.
Feb. 22. Rather disappointed at not receiving a letter from Mr. Inchbald.

After this London visit, the quiet of Standingfield seemed more insupportable than ever. Elizabeth thought the neighbours less attentive. She wanted society; she pined for employment; she declared herself "unhappy, very unhappy." She repeated her application for an engagement in the Norwich company, and was almost distracted at the refusals she met from Mr. Griffiths. To make things worse, the money matters at the farm were not in a prosperous state; poverty threatened, and Elizabeth dreaded it. She longed to be independent, to help others, to work for those she loved. She was full of confidence in her powers, full of ambition, full of hope. She must do something. She soon resolved that, at all hazards, she would launch forth into the great world-sea, alone and unfriended. She would try the London managers; she *would* be an actress. From her own memorandum we learn how she set out :—

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"On the 11th of April (1772), early in the morning, I left my mother's house unknown to any one, came to London in the Norwich fly, and got lodgings at the 'Rose and Crown' in St. John's Street."

Such a step in such times was indeed a daring one. London was then even more dangerous to a lovely young girl, quite alone, than it would be now. Gay Lotharios abounded; sharpers and schemers were to be found at every step. Some of Elizabeth's adventures as given by Mrs. Pilkington, are rather amusing, but not strictly correct. Though rash with all the rashness of perfect innocence, she still had some knowledge of London, and a good deal of sound common sense. We know to a certainty that she arrived at the "Rose and Crown" late in the evening of the 11th of April. She was anxious to avoid meeting her sisters or their husbands till her interviews with the managers should be over, as she had a wholesome dread of being sent back to Standingfield against her will. The first thing she did on the morning after reaching town, was to set out in search of a distant relation, but, to her great disappointment, she found that this friend had gone to Wales. The next day she proceeded alone to call on two managers, Mr. Reddish and Mr. King. Mr. King gave her reasons to expect that he would call next day at her lodgings. He did not come, and she imagined that it was because he despised the meanness and bad situation of the "Rose and Crown," so, after many strange adventures, which are not given in her journal, she finally took up her abode at the "White Swan" on Holborn Bridge. She again called on Mr. King, who gave her some hopes of an engagement, and she wrote to tell her sister, Mrs. Hunt, that she had arrived in town, but directed the answers to be left at Orange Street. The people who kept the "White Swan" were interested in their mysterious lodger, and often asked her to dine with them. Such invitations must have been acceptable, as she was living on penny rolls and water.

Her beauty could not pass unnoticed. Though she did

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her best to avoid the principal streets and to go out at hours when she was least likely to attract attention, she one day received a letter from a stranger, addressed to her in her own name. Fearless and unsuspicious, she answered it, but after a few letters had passed, the correspondence dropped. On the 21st, when she was on her way to call on Mr. King, she met her brother-in-law, Mr. Slender, who took her home with him to see her sister. At first, he threatened to send her back to Standingfield, but after awhile all was made straight, and she went to stay with the Slenders while the theatre negotiations were pending. The arrangement of the matter had passed from Mr. King to Mr. Dodd, and Mr. Dodd agreed that Elizabeth Simpson's name should be on the list of the Drury Lane performers. But the manager was utterly unprincipled, and only wished to gain Elizabeth's favour by a mere pretence. She says she was "rather frighted" at Dodd's conduct, then she was "vexed and terrified beyond measure;" and at last she was so provoked at his impertinence that she snatched up a basin of hot water from the tea-table and dashed it in his face! After this proof of the purity of her principles, Mr. Dodd troubled himself no more about her powers as an actress. She now saw the danger of her position. A young, beautiful, unprotected girl has a thousand difficulties in pushing her way to the stage, from which a married woman is comparatively free. So when Mr. Inchbald, who was now acting in London, met her again at her sister's house, she made no objection to marry him. He was in his thirty-seventh year; she was in her nineteenth. She was not deeply or romantically in love, but she knew that he was an upright, kind-hearted man, a friend whose experience would help her in her profession, and who would protect her against insult.

Mrs. Slender returned from Standingfield on the 9th of June, and on the evening of the same day, Mr. Rice, a Catholic priest, called and married Elizabeth Simpson to Mr. Inchbald. On the 10th, Mr. Inchbald break-

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fasted with the Slenders, and they all went to church, where the marriage again took place according to the Protestant rites. There was company to dinner, and the happy pair were not, in the usual way, whisked through the dust into the country, but Mrs. Slender and the bride went quietly to the play in the evening, to see Mr. Inchbald, in defiance of all omens, act the part of Mr. Oakley in *The Jealous Wife*. A few days after the marriage Mr. Inchbald brought his wife to Bristol, where he had accepted an engagement. On their road they fell in with Mr. Dodd, who showed his resentment by *not* wishing them joy on their marriage. They had no sooner settled themselves at Bristol, than Mrs. Inchbald began to study carefully the character of Cordelia. Almost every clever girl imagines, like Gwendoline Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*, that she can become an actress at a moment's notice. It takes some trouble to show that even to learn the A B C of the stage, hours of patient labour are necessary. Mr. Inchbald was a zealous, steady actor. He made his wife "spout" at home and in the open air, till she hit upon a better tone of declamation than she had ever had before. Her first appearance did not take place till the 4th of September, 1772, when her husband acted Lear to her Cordelia. Her *début* was not very striking. Her natural impediment of speech brought on a slow, measured delivery which did not suit strong passions.

The engagement at Bristol being ended, the Inchbalds returned to London, and after a visit at Standingfield, proceeded to Scotland. Mrs. Inchbald had wished to see life, and she now saw it with all the drudgery and perplexities which beset the lot of travelling players. Sometimes she and her husband supped on turtle and venison ; sometimes they had to be contented with shabby dinners in shabbier lodgings up four pair of stairs, where dirty tablecloths and steel forks were a luxury. Mrs. Inchbald appeared in all the towns in Scotland, now as a Masque in *Romeo and Juliet*

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now as a Witch in *Macbeth*, now as the heroine of the piece. Often she had to associate with persons of low character and tainted reputations, and often rank and fashion came to flatter her vanity and worship her beauty. At Edinburgh, Mr. Sterling, an amateur who had played Iago at her benefit, contrived his visits so adroitly as always to hit upon the hour when her husband was at the theatre. She consulted her confessor, and in her pocket-book of that year she wrote :—"On the 27th February, Mr. Inchbald being from home, I insisted upon being alone." Though she had a passionate love for admiration, and was often as irritating, as provoking, and as coquettish as her own Miss Milner, still she was always a true and faithful wife. Tears as well smiles diversified her married life—there were constant quarrels and reconciliations. One day she and her husband disputed about a division of salary ; the next he was affectionately teaching her to act ; one day he complained of her coldness, and another he was all admiration for her beautiful face, which he vainly tried to paint. He was always bent on taking her portrait, but she was too lovely. One day he got a likeness by Garrick, and began to copy it ; while he was busy he was called to dinner ; he did not come, and, angry at his disobedience, Mrs. Inchbald "tore his labours to pieces." But with all her whims and humours, he looked upon her as a spoiled darling, a petted child who must be indulged, and this was in reality the best way to treat her.

Her stay in Scotland improved her in many ways. Though she acted three nights out of every week, she was now eager to be an authoress, and gave up several hours every day to literature and French. She paid her French master a shilling a lesson, and she soon had an opportunity of putting her lessons into practice. On the 12th of June Mr. Inchbald had a dispute with his audience which obliged him to leave the Edinburgh Theatre. He resolved on going to France, where he hoped to succeed as a miniature-painter. During this French sojourn, Mrs. Inchbald was not idle ; she made

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extracts from history and biography ; she took notes of all remarkable places, and was particularly exact about dates.

After three months, the Inchbalds found it necessary to return to England. Painting was not likely to bring any grist to the mill, so there was nothing for it but to begin stage business again. By the time they reached Brighton they were in urgent need, they often had to do without either dinner or tea, and were once obliged to take refuge in the fields, and dine off turnips. They now went to Liverpool, where they got an engagement in a theatrical company. Here, too, they met the Kemble family, whose fortunes were also at a low ebb. Mrs. Siddons had to do all sorts of household work, but she cheerfully lightened her tasks by singing away her time. Sometimes she and Mrs. Inchbald sat together at the play, for Mrs. Inchbald had not yet found out that superiority of beauty in her friend which often vexed her in after years. She would shrink away at the approach of Mrs. Siddons, saying, her hesitation of speech coming out in the last few words, " Don't come to this place. I won't stay near you. If you do not go, I must, because you are pret-ti-er than I." In the February of 1777 Mrs. Inchbald sketched the outlines of her *Simple Story*. The hero was taken from John Kemble, then in his twentieth year, just returned from Douay College, where he had been studying for a Catholic priest. This circumstance, together with his wonderful beauty and his coldness and severity of manner, made him the living model of Dorriforth. He and Mrs. Inchbald admired one another; they were intimate friends, but she says that they were never anything more. There was a lofty grandeur about him that marked him out from other men, and was a great contrast to her own freakish nature, which was shown once by her going out after dark with a friend, rapping at doors in New Street and King Street, and then running away. She studied Kemble thoroughly ; he was to her genius the marble which she worked up into living passionate form. The Inchbalds,

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Siddonses, and Mr. Kemble constantly lived in the same lodgings. Mrs. Inchbald read, wrote, and made extracts from books: Mr. Inchbald employed his leisure in painting the portraits of the party; Mr. Kemble studied history, composed his tragedy of *Belisarius*, and prepared himself for the stage. Mrs. Siddons, who had thrown away ambition after her great London disappointment, passed many a day washing and ironing for the family, and then sang duets with her brother. Sometimes, Mr. Boaden tells us, the party walked out together in the evenings, played at cards, or went out into a field and had a game at blind-man's-buff or puss in the corner. When success and fame poured in, they perhaps looked back upon these struggling days with a sigh, "*Ah! si jeunesse savait.*"

The cares of the family were still many and pressing. Mrs. Inchbald was often in tears when she thought of the distress of her mother and sister Dolly. She had, with great difficulty, induced Mr. Inchbald to consent to a division of their salaries, so that by strict economy she might make presents to her family. Her spiritual state, too, gave her anxiety, as may be seen by the following extract from her journal, one amongst many :—

"No actual sin, but great coldness and imperfection in all my duties, especially in my religious ones, as in prayer and fasting. Almighty God! look down upon Thy erring creature. Pity my darkness and my imperfections, and direct me to the truth! Make me humble under the difficulties which adhere to my faith, and patient under the perplexities which accompany its practice."

She was often troubled by what she calls the difficulties of her faith; she had strong doubts as to revealed religion, and yet she acknowledges her own incapacity to decide upon such questions, humbly submits her reason to the creeds of the Church, and promises to strive against any future disbelief.

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Time passed on, and as the company proceeded from Liverpool to Hull, and from York to Leeds, the *Simple Story* was slowly advancing to its end. Kemble's tragedy of *Belisarius*, refused at Covent Garden, was brought out at Hull on the 4th of December, 1778, and Mrs. Inchbald played one of the principal characters and spoke the epilogue. Her husband and she were slowly rising in their profession ; they had friends worthy of them, and all promised prosperity and sunshine, but while they were acting at Leeds, Mr. Inchbald died suddenly from disease of the heart. In her journal his wife describes the day of his death as a " day of horror ; " the week in which it occurred, is called a " week of grief, horror, and despair ; " and at the conclusion of her diary for the year 1779 she wrote, " Began this year a happy wife—finished it a wretched widow." She was now twenty-six, with £300 between her and poverty. She had mixed with people of all classes, and though a stiff actress, was well up in her profession. The York company to which she belonged ranked only second to the London companies, and she was taking the first business. The manager offered to put her upon the highest scale of salary—a guinea and a half a week—if she would stay with him another year ; but she declined, for she was bent on a London engagement. Being now free, a host of admirers buzzed round her. The first who proposed was Suett, the comedian, who was instantly refused. Kemble remained nothing but a friend, though Mrs. Inchbald frankly admits that " she would have jumped to have had him." He never could have been blindly fond of any woman, and even as friends, he and Mrs. Inchbald had constant quarrels. If she had admirers at York she had ten times more at Edinburgh, and still more when in the following year she succeeded in getting an engagement at Covent Garden. Lord Carmarthen took her to a masquerade, Sir Charles Bunbury dangled after her for years, and Mr. Glover, with a carriage and a settlement of £500 a year, proposed twice. But she could not love those

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who loved her, and those whom she loved did not ask her to marry, but only gave her a cold distant admiration which piqued her to the quick.

Her principles were so high in those corrupt days that Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, said, "That woman Inchbald has solemnly devoted herself to virtue and a garret." Some of her friends thought it would be better if she left the stage, and consulted a Catholic divine, but he gave it as his opinion that she might remain an actress. What else was there for her to do? Her *Simple Story*, which had cost her years of labour, had been returned by half the publishers in London. The stage was all she could look to, to supply her with daily bread. She accepted the salary of £1 6s. 8d. a week, and on October 31, 1780, made her first appearance at Covent Garden as the page Bellario in Beaumont and Fletcher's play of *Philaster*. A few nights after she played Angelina in *The Fop's Fortunes*. In this part she was much applauded, and she took courage to send Mr. Harris, the manager, by her friend Wilson, a farce which she had written. This farce was given to a critic, who went about telling everybody that it was "indecent, and had not a word spelt right." Her salary was, however, raised to £2 a week, with the necessity of working steadily at her dresses to keep up to the splendour or fashion of the characters she played. These were hard conditions, and Wilson, though refused as a husband, still took the most active interest as a friend in her concerns. He asked Harris for an increase of salary, and was told if she had a low salary, she did high business, and she could not have money and consequence at the same time. But he cared little, when it suited his convenience, for making her walk through a pantomime with all the riff-raff of the theatre. Her salary was raised to £3 a week, and so continued till the end of the season.

In the summer of 1782 she performed at the Haymarket, and then left London for Dublin, where she acted with

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John Kemble ; but some insulting advances from Daly, the manager, made it impossible for her to remain any longer at his theatre, and he was only too glad to pay up her salary and let her depart. This year was a fortunate one to her. She at last succeeded in persuading Colman to accept one of her dramatic pieces. He says that he "never met with so cramp a hand in his life, nor had even been so much puzzled to make out a piece," but he eventually bought it for a hundred guineas. This farce was the *Mogul Tale*, and Mrs. Inchbald played in it herself, though she was not known as the authoress. She was on the stage as Selina in the second act when she heard the cue, "Since we left Hyde Park Corner." She had merely to repeat, "Hyde Park Corner," but terror robbed her of speech ; she turned pale, and at length, with that stutter which only came on in private, she slowly and in a sepulchral voice stammered out, "Hh—yde Pa—ark Co—orner." She records in her journal, "I played in the *Mogul Tale*, my own farce ; it went off with the greatest applause." She then told Colman that he had in his hands a comedy of hers which she had given him to look at, as the work of a Mrs. Woodley. The manager had had it for three years ; he now promised to go home and read it. In the July of the following year it was produced at the Haymarket under the name of *I'll Tell You What.*

After having struggled with poverty so long, she was now on the road to fortune. Her salary at Covent Garden had been raised a pound a week. The new comedy produced £300, and at her benefit her play and farce were acted together. When she came forward as Selina, in all the pride of beauty and talent, she was greeted with shouts of applause which lasted for several minutes. Did she then remember the dingy little theatre at Bury, and her girlish aspirations, cherished so long in vain ? The run of her comedy had scarcely ceased when her second farce, *Appearance is Against Them*, was brought out at Covent Garden

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and met with unusual success. This piece was worth £130 to her. Managers now clamoured for her plays. Her comedy, *Such Things Are*, brought her £900, and the *Simple Story*, which so many publishers had refused as worth nothing, was eagerly bought up by Robinson for a hundred pounds a volume. It had lain by for twelve years, and had been constantly touched up and altered. The effect, however, is singularly fresh; it reads as if it had been written at a sitting. Dorriforth, by education a Catholic priest, is entrusted with the care of Miss Milner, who is bequeathed to his care by her father. She is beautiful, vain, and coquettish. The severe, handsome Dorriforth piques her curiosity, and when she goes to live with him and two Catholic ladies, Mrs. Horton and Mrs. Woodley, she alternatively fascinates and teases the little household. She is a Protestant and an heiress, careless of authority and careless of appearances; she loves pleasure, and especially loves her own way, and generally succeeds in getting it. Mr. Sandford, a Jesuit priest and Dorriforth's adviser, looks upon her with disgust, constantly says cutting things to her, and annoys her by telling her that he did really not recollect *her*.

Among her admirers is Lord Frederic Lawnley, whom she encourages, though she tells her guardian that she will give him up. One day he meets her and covers her hand with kisses. Dorriforth—the grave, reserved Dorriforth—cannot stand this; he rushes forward and strikes him a blow in the face. A duel is threatened; Miss Milner is distracted at her guardian's danger, for she has learned to love him with all the strength of her nature. In order to save him she tells a lie, and declares that her affections are fixed on Lord Frederic, but to Miss Woodley she admits that it is Dorriforth she really loves. The strict Catholic spinster is horrified at the sacrilege, for Dorriforth is under religious vows and bound to a single life. She pities her friend and urges her to go away at once. How tedious does she find Bath, the place of her exile! The walks are melancholy, the company

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insipid, the ball-rooms fatiguing. She hears that Dorriforth is attending his cousin, Lord Elmwood. She prays like an insane person to be taken home from confinement, and at last she falls seriously ill. When she recovers, Dorriforth is now Lord Elmwood through his cousin's death ; he is released from his vows and at liberty to marry. She is overjoyed, but Lord Elmwood remains cold—colder than Dorriforth has ever been. The news soon comes that he has agreed to marry Miss Fenton, an immaculate beauty, who had been his cousin's betrothed, and who seems to go with the title. Miss Milner returns, as captivating, as wilful as ever. Lord Elmwood is sometimes ice, though occasionally he thaws, while Sandford does his best to expose Miss Milner's faults. She is tortured with jealousy, uneasy, distracted. One day there is some talk about her health ; Lord Elmwood puts question after question to Miss Woodley, and at length the truth comes out that it is he himself that his ward loves. The effect is magical. "For God's sake," he cries, "take care what you are doing ! You are destroying my prospects of futurity. You are making the world too dear for me." He breaks with the frozen and faultless Miss Fenton, and all is now sunshine with Miss Milner, but her nature is such that she must play with her conquest. She must show her power over the stern, austere Lord Elmwood. She goes to a masquerade against his wishes, dressed us an amazon. His anger, though it is reserved, is deep ; he writes and breaks off their intended marriage. He is going to the West Indies, and will take leave of his ward for ever. The morning of his departure comes ; his boxes, nailed and corded, are in the hall ; breakfast is at half-past six, and Miss Milner, urged by her friend, comes down. The carriage is at the door ; Miss Milner's agony increases ; even Sandford pities her ; all hope seems gone. Lord Elmwood takes her hand for the last good-bye, and her tears flow in torrents.

"Separate this moment ! " cries Sandford, "or resolve to

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be separated only by death." He then took a book from a bookcase and said, "Lord Elmwood, do you love this woman?" "More than my life," he replied with the most heartfelt accents. He then turned to Miss Milner. "I believe you can say so," returned Sandford; "and in the name of God and your own happiness, since this is the state of you both, let me put it out of your power to part."

So the marriage takes place, but Miss Milner is struck with horror when she sees that the ring which Lord Elmwood has put upon her finger in haste is a *mourning ring!*

Seventeen years pass, and Lady Elmwood is a disgraced woman. Her husband, after four years' happiness, goes to the West Indies; she gradually gets impatient and distrustful, goes into society, takes Lord Frederic Lawnley for her lover, and then, when she hears her husband is on his way home, she flies alone to a dreary country retreat. Her daughter—Lord Elmwood's daughter—is sent after her; with all the cold severity of his nature, he will have nothing to say to her or his faithless wife, who dies at thirty-five in an agony of repentance. The story now turns on the daughter's affection for the unseen father. She is at length allowed to live in one of Lord Elmwood's castles with Miss Woodley and Sandford, under the express understanding that her father is never to see her. One day she falls on the stairs, and as he lifts her up, the only name that comes to his lips is "Miss Milner, dear Miss Milner!" But his resentment is not yet conquered; it is only when he is obliged to rescue her from an unprincipled admirer that the iron bands of his nature really give away. His joy, his fondness, Matilda's delight, all follow.

Mrs. Inchbald is mistress of the art of emotion. She chooses strong passions, and carries her readers away with her. She never attempts fine writing; the history of deep feeling is enough for her, and her readers are on tenter-hooks as they follow her. They feel with Miss Milner, they

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are jealous, anxious, fearful for her. *A Simple Story* has only four principal characters — Miss Milner, Dorriforth, Sandford, and Miss Woodley. We know each of them; we could tell exactly how they would be likely to act under certain circumstances. Miss Milner is consistent with herself throughout—vain, untruthful, loving, fascinating. Maria Edgeworth wrote to Mrs. Inchbald :—

"I have just been reading for the third, I believe for the fourth, time the *Simple Story*. The effect upon my feelings was as powerful as at the first reading. I never read any novel—I except none—I never read any novel that affected me so strongly, or that so completely possessed me with the belief in the real existence of the people it represents. I never once recollected the author while I was reading it, never once said or thought, 'That's a fine sentiment,' or 'That's well expressed;' I believed it all to be real, and was affected as I should be at the real scenes if they had passed before my eyes. It is truly and deeply pathetic. I determined this time of reading to read it as a critic, or rather as an author, but I quite forgot my intention in the interest. I am now of opinion that it is by leaving more than most writers to the imagination, that you succeed so well in affecting it."

Mrs. Inchbald's next novel was *Nature and Art*, which William Hazlitt considered one of the most interesting and pathetic stories ever written. The French Revolution plays a part in it, but the interest chiefly turns on the opposite fortunes of the two brothers Norwynne, and of their sons William and Henry. The contrast between the fate of the seduced village girl, Hannah, and her betrayer, William, is only too true. One crime sinks her into every depth of guilt, while he rises to the rank of a judge—*her* judge.

"The jury consulted but a few minutes: the verdict was

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guilty. She heard it with composure. But when William placed the fatal velvet on his head and rose to pronounce her sentence, she started with a kind of convulsive motion, retreated a step or two back, and lifting up her hands, exclaimed, 'Oh! not from *you!*' The piercing shriek which accompanied those words prevented their being heard by part of the audience, and those who heard them thought little of their meaning. Serene and dignified, William delivered the final speech, ending with 'Dead, dead, dead!'"

These cries from the heart, these "Eloi! Eloi!" which only rise when the pitch of agony is at its highest, these Mrs. Inchbald has power to flash into our minds with amazing truth.

In 1789, when she retired from the stage, her reputation was at its highest. She had published an edition of plays with prefaces, and now she got fifty guineas by merely looking over a catalogue of fifty farces, drawing her pen across one or two, and writing the names of others in their places. The catalogue was then printed with "SELECTED BY MRS. INCHBALD" on the title-page. "The prodigious sale of my prefaces," she says, "has tempted the booksellers to this offer. I am sometimes idle for months or years, but when I resolve on writing I earn my money with speed." At her death she left a fortune of nearly £5,000. She accumulated this sum by the most rigid economy. "Her dress," she says, "was always becoming, and seldom worth as much as *eightpence!*" At Edinburgh her weekly expenses for board and lodging only amounted to eight shillings, and at York to twelve. After the publication of the *Simple Story*, when her fame was at its height, when her door was besieged by the first society in London and her table covered with invitations, she only allowed herself twenty-five shillings a week for her household expenses, out of which she gave £2 8s. in Christmas-boxes, and in the course of the year saved £6 16s. This habit of petty savings became rooted in her nature.

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She would give five and ten pounds to her sick or old relations, but would often refuse to part with a few pence. Every Sunday she dined with Mr. and Mrs. Kemble. One cold winter's day, when snow was on the ground, she was on her way when an old crossing-sweeper at Great Britain Street begged for charity. In spite of his age, his rags, and the bitter cold of the day, Mrs. Inchbald turned a deaf ear to him and steadily walked on. She was hardly out of hearing when her foot slipped on a piece of frozen snow, and she fell flat on the pavement. The old man ran to help her up, but she only thanked him and went on. When she reached the Kembles, pity, reproach, and the sense of the man's generosity so overcame her that she fainted away. Another more amusing instance is as follows:—Miss Wilkinson and Miss Siddons drove out one summer's evening in a pony-carriage to visit Mrs. Inchbald at Kensington. The day closed in more rapidly than they expected, and they were anxious to return home by a shorter route. But there was a turnpike, and they had no money. They begged and implored Mrs. Inchbald to lend them twopence. But no! all their entreaties were in vain; she persisted in her refusal, saying, with her usual hesitation on the last words of the sentence, "I'll lend you ten pounds, because you'll remember to pa—y that, but I won't lend you twopence, for that you'll never pa—y me." "What a screw!" our readers will exclaim; and yet this "screw" was stinting herself of comforts, and doing without a servant, that she might provide her old, sick, and not very thankful sister with necessaries. She allowed this sister, Mrs. Hunt, £100 a year. At her death Mrs. Inchbald says:—

"To return to my melancholy. Many a time this winter, when I cried with cold, I said to myself, 'But thank God my sister has not to stir from her room; she has her fire lighted and all her provisions brought to her ready-cooked. She would be less able to bear what I bear.' It almost made me

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warm when I reflected that she suffered no cold, and yet perhaps the severe weather affected her, for after only two days of *dangerous* illness she died. I have now buried my whole family—I mean my Standingfield family, the only part to whom I ever felt tender attachment."

For many years she "knocked about" in lodgings—at Frith Street, then at Leicester Court, where she fetched "her own water up three pair of stairs;" at Annandale House, Turnham Green, where her hands were "*clean*, which they had not been for many a day;" then at a milliner's in the Strand. Here her rooms were so small that she was all over black and blue from thumping against the furniture; she could kindle her fire from her bed and put on her cap as she dined, for the looking-glass stood on the same table with her dinner. She slept on a sofa in St. George's Row, because the chimney would not draw in her bedroom, and finally came to an anchor at a Catholic boarding-house in Kensington, where she died. The principal thing which affected her was the loss of her much-cherished beauty. In an amusing "Description of Me," she says:—"Figure, handsome and striking, but a little too stiff and erect. Face, beautiful in effect and beautiful in every feature. Countenance, full of spirit and sweetness, excessively interesting," &c. But as years passed on we read in her journal:—

"1798. Happy, but for suspicion amounting to a certainty of a rapid appearance of age in my face.

"1799. Extremely happy, but for the still nearer approach of age.

"1800. Still happy, but for my still increasing appearance of declining years."

When John Kemble came to see her in 1820, she would only let him in on condition of his not attempting to look at her, and she sat during the whole of his visit with her face turned to the wall.

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"The state of apathy is not a calamity," she writes to Mrs. Phillips; "it is the blessing of old age; it is the substitute for patience. It permits me to look in the glass without screaming with horror."

Yet others still thought her beautiful. She was not far from fifty when Mr. Charles Moore, brother of Sir John Moore, a very young man, fell so much in love that he wished to marry her, and refused to be looked upon as her son. In his flattering letters he tells her that some one asked, "Did she not look very pretty?" "She was by far the prettiest woman in the room." "And the youngest?" "Upon my soul," was the answer, "I never thought about that." But the apathy which she described was slowly stealing over her. Madame de Staël, who insisted upon meeting her at a third person's house, asked her why she shunned society.

"Because I dread the loneliness that will follow." "What! will you feel your solitude more when you return from this company than you did before you came?" "Yes." "I should think it would elevate your spirits. Why will you feel your loneliness more?" "Because I have no one to tell that I have seen you, no one to whom I can repeat the many ecomiums you have passed on my *Simple Story*, no one to enjoy any of your praises but myself." "Ah! ah! you have no children;" and she turned to her daughter with pathetic tenderness.

Mrs. Opie says that Madame de Staël urged Mrs. Inchbald to write more, but she answered that her life was so retired, she had nothing to excite her fancy. Madame de Staël told her to paint from herself. After Mrs. Inchbald left, the great Corinne leant from the windows of the drawing-room, keeping her in view as long as she could. Then, pressing her hand over her eyes, she flung herself back into

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her chair, exclaiming, "Cette longue figure maigre, que s'est disparue sur le pavé."

One of the last acts of Mrs. Inchbald's life was to destroy the MS. of her memoirs, for which a thousand guineas had been offered. She burnt it from conscientious motives, fearing to inflict pain on those who were mentioned in it. Early in June, 1821, she felt the beginning of a cold; her appetite failed and she had a sore throat. Her illness increased, and on Wednesday, the 1st of August, she died in the sixty-eighth year of her age. She was buried the following Saturday in the burial-ground of Kensington. "I trust that I may please God," she writes in her journal, "though I may not please any of His creatures. I have always been aspiring, and now my sole ambition is to go to heaven when I die." Repentance and forgetfulness of this world shut out all else. There is something pathetic in the loneliness of Mrs. Inchbald's later years; pathos lay at the root of her nature, and gave its charm to the *Simple Story*, which stands alone in the history of literature as a book "like which there has not been, nor will there be another."

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III.

MADAME DE STAËL.

1766–1817.

Birth and early precocity—A tornado of a girl—Opinion of Madame de Genlis—Marriage with Baron de Staël Holstein—A "priestess of Apollo"—Admiration of Rousseau's works—The terrible 2nd of September—Takes refuge at Juniper Hall—Return to Paris—*Delphine*—Life at Coppet—*Corinne*—Visit to Germany—*De L'Allemagne*—Marriage with M. Rocca—Lionised in London—Returns to Paris—Visit to Queen Hortense—Illness and death.

UNLIKE many of her sisterhood, Madame de Staël had not the spur of poverty to prompt her genius. She knew nothing of that "want of pence" which Tennyson tells us vexes public men, and, we may add, public women, as well. She came into the world—to use the familiar saying—"with a silver spoon in her mouth." Immense riches, the society of illustrious people, were her birthright; she was nurtured amongst the storms and convulsions of an approaching Revolution; she was born to greatness.

Monsieur Necker, a wealthy Paris banker, a native of Geneva, was attracted, during one of his visits to his birthplace, by the talent and beauty of Mademoiselle Susanne Cruchot. She was the daughter of a poor Swiss pastor who lived in the Pays de Vaud mountains; he had taken great pains with her education, and her knowledge of languages and sciences was a standing wonder to her friends. Gibbon, the historian, saw and loved her, but on his return to England, his father would not hear of this strange alliance.

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So the historian "sighed as a lover, but obeyed as a son," and Mademoiselle Susanne submitted to her fate. After her father's death, she maintained herself and her mother by teaching young ladies at Geneva, and it was in this position that M. Necker found her. In a few months, the humble *gouvernante* was the wife of a millionaire and future Minister of France, while her salons became the rendezvous for *noblesse*, merchants, men of science, and literature.

On the 22nd of April, 1766, Germaine, the only child of M. and Madame Necker, was born at Paris. It was impossible to keep such a child in the nursery. Almost as soon as she could speak, she was allowed to come into the drawing-room. A wooden stool was placed by Madame Necker's arm-chair, and here Germaine took her seat. Then came the Abbé Raynal, who clasped her hands and talked to her as gravely as if she had been five-and-twenty; then came Marmontel, Grimm, and the Marquis de Pesay, and all had something to say to the little prodigy. At dinner she was silent, but she read the faces around with intense interest, and politics were not thrown away on her. More guests arrived, and the more remarkable they were, the more pleasure they seemed to take in attacking, provoking, and, if possible, perplexing her. They discussed the books she read, and recommended others. At the age of ten, she gravely proposed marrying Gibbon himself, in order to secure his agreeable company for herself and her parents. Her favourite amusement was cutting out paper kings and queens, and making them act tragedies. It was a forbidden joy, and from it she acquired the habit of twirling in her fingers a strip of paper or a twig stripped of its leaves. Without this slender sceptre, her eloquence is said to have deserted her. During her lessons with Madame Necker, Germaine paced up and down the room. Whenever her mother's back was turned, the future authoress took stolen peeps at *Clarissa Harlowe*, "so that the elopement of Clarissa became one of the great events of her youth."

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She had few companions of her own age. One of them was Mdlle. Huber. Germaine received her "with transport, and promised to love her for ever." She wished to know what foreign languages she was learning, and if she often went to the play. Mdlle. Huber replied that she had only been three or four times. Germaine promised to take her, and suggested that on their return they should write an account of whatever play they had seen, and note the striking points. This, she said, was her usual habit. She also proposed that they should write to one another every morning. Germaine was at this time eleven, with a swarthy complexion, a full, projecting mouth, and large, dark eyes. Close study proved so injurious to her that at the age of fourteen, she was sent to her father's country house at St. Ouen. Mdlle. Huber went with her, and the two girls dressed as nymphs and muses, and acted impromptu plays and tragedies in the open air. Learning was forgotten for imagination, and after this interruption Madame Necker's lessons were never resumed. When people admired Germaine's wit and eloquence, her mother answered, "All that is nothing—nothing at all—to what I wished to accomplish." She had none of her daughter's enthusiasm and brilliance; she was cold and rather austere—worthy, amiable, but somewhat dull. Germaine respected and, to a certain extent, loved her, but all the hero-worship of her nature was called forth by her father. The abject idolatry which she felt for him seemed to sweep everything before it and to swallow up all other feelings with its overwhelming force.

Wordsworth tells us that we "live by admiration, hope, and love." In this sense, Germaine Necker may be said to have lived indeed. If M. Necker was not a great man, he had some of the elements of greatness. He had a profound faith in the human race; he believed in the rights of the people; he was thoroughly sincere and upright, and so disinterested that when he became Minister of Finance he refused to touch a farthing of his salary. His daughter and

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he had a perfect understanding with each other. She exaggerated her likeness to him; and for his calmness, reserve, and dignity, none of which she possessed herself, her admiration was unbounded. If he made any sacrifice, she coloured it tenfold by attributing to him all the ardour and fire of her own nature. Like many noble, high-souled women, she must have been a perfect tornado of a girl, with a mind bubbling and seething from its own intensity, and affording a fatiguing puzzle to ordinary mortals.

Madame de Genlis gives a characteristic account of the impression which the future Corinne made upon her. "It was at Belle Chasse," she says, "that I formed an intimacy with Madame Necker before the Revolution. She came to see me, and brought her daughter, who was not pretty, but she was very animated, and though she spoke a great deal, she spoke cleverly. I remember reading to Madame Necker and her daughter, one of the 'Pièces de Theatre for Young Ladies' (Zélie), which I had not yet published. I cannot express the enthusiasm and the demonstrations of pleasure exhibited by the young lady during the reading—they astonished without pleasing me. She wept, she uttered exclamations at every page, and kissed my hand at each moment; in short, she embarrassed me greatly. Madame Necker had educated her very ill, and had suffered her to pass three-fourths of each day in her drawing-room, among the crowd of beaux-esprits of the time, who entered into dissertations with Mademoiselle on the passions and on love. The solitude of her chamber, and a few good books would have been more to her advantage. She learned to talk fast and much, without any reflection."

Such was the verdict of Madame de Genlis, who was thoroughly wedded to her own cut-and-dried views on education. But though she might produce a creditable princess, or a fascinating Pamela, she could never have turned out a Madame de Staël. It was precisely this freedom from restraint, which allowed Germaine's ardent mind room

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to grow, freed her from the narrow prejudices of her time and sex, and gave wings to her soul. Intercourse with men of enlarged views is in itself an education. She wrote poetry and prose, a comedy in verse, two tragedies, and some tales, which were not published for some years. But she wrote under difficulties. M. Necker had forbidden his wife to write, as he did not like to feel that he was disturbing her. His daughter was so afraid of being also forbidden the use of her pen, that she got the habit of writing, as it were, flying, so that her father, seeing her always standing or leaning against the mantel-piece, could not think he was disturbing her. She did not even possess a writing-desk, till long after his death. When Corinne had made a noise in the world, she said, "I have a great desire to have a large table. I think I have a right to one now."

Her girlhood lasted but a short time, as in 1786, when she was twenty years of age, her marriage with the Baron de Staël Holstein took place. He was much older than she was, a Protestant, and Swedish Ambassador to the Court of Paris. His wife's dowry of £14,000 a year was a boon to him; the rich banker's money filling the extravagant ambassador's pockets admirably. Madame de Staël next took her place as one of the leaders of Parisian society. She was no beauty: her swarthy skin and strongly-marked features, shut her out from *that*, but her eyes were fine, and she had, what Benjamin Constant calls, a "magnificent look." Her voice was full of music and feeling. "If I were queen," said Madame de Tessé, "I would order Madame de Staël to talk to me for ever." Then, too, she had a radiant smile, a frank manner, and an eloquence which dazzled all who heard her.

Here is a high-flown description of her by M. de Guiberts, who painted the enchantress under the name of Zuliné:—

"Zuliné is only twenty, and she is the most celebrated priestess of Apollo. She is the favourite of the god. Her large black eyes beamed with genius; her hair, the colour of

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ebony, fell on her shoulders in waving locks; her features were more characteristic than delicate, they told of something beyond the destiny of her sex. Thus might we paint the muse of poesy, or Clio, or Melpomene. 'Here she is! here she is!' all cried, when she appeared, and breath seemed gone. . . . I hear her—I look at her with transport. I see in her features charms beyond beauty. How varied and expressive is the play of her countenance! What shades there are in the tone of her voice! How perfectly do thought and expression agree! She talks, and even if her words did not reach me, her tones, her gestures, her looks, would have made me understand her. She ceases a moment, and her last words echo in my heart, and I see in her eyes what she has not yet spoken. She is wholly silent, and the temple is filled with applause. Her head bends modestly, her drooping eyelids veil her eyes of fire, and the sun seems gone from us."

And yet this "priestess of Apollo" was only mortal after all. When she was presented to Marie Antoinette, her curtsey was all wrong; one of the trimmings of her dress got loose. And when she called on Madame de Polignac, she forgot her cap in the carriage! At the age of seventeen, she had startled old Madame de Mouchy, one of the greatest ladies of the *ancien régime*, by asking her what she thought of love; and her friends were constantly subject to similar shocks.

Two years after her marriage, her letters on the works and character of Rousseau appeared. She was a fervent admirer of his. His ideas on liberty, fraternity, and equality, seemed like a new gospel, and no one guessed that they were sowing the seeds of a revolution. Talleyrand tells us how Madame l'Ambassadrice de Suède, arrayed in a hideous turban, and dress of her own invention, that defied fashion's decrees, used to throw her plump white arms aloft, and declaim on the politics of the day, sometimes apostrophising the shade of Jean Jacques as follows: "Rise from thy ashes, O Rousseau!

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and encourage in his career the man, who having to contend with the extremity of misery, aims at securing the perfect good."

Talleyrand did not admire political women; he much preferred pretty simpletons like Madame Grant, whom he afterwards married. But Madame de Staël was especially anxious that he should be amongst her slaves. She followed him about, she talked at him, so that at last he cried in despair, "Oh, that she could make up her mind to detest me!" Once she attacked him thus—"So you do not like me!" "Madame, I always like you" (je vous aime toujours). "No, you do not always like me. If Madame Grant and I should fall into the water, which of us would you save first?" From this awkward question Talleyrand delivered himself by saying, "I believe, Madame, that you know how to swim!"

Madame de Staël was always conscious of her own superiority. She sometimes said of an author, "He is not my equal, and if we enter into a contest he will come out limping." One of her friends says that when she was very young, and had rather a presentiment than any proof of her strength, "I have heard her carry her hopes so high that I have much doubted her realizing them." Her hearers were often startled by hearing certain frank speeches which she uttered in perfect sincerity. "With all the understanding I possess, with *my* talents, *my* reputation," &c., &c. She frequently repeated the praises she received in letters, but there was great good-nature in her self-love. It was not always present, but when it was, it said frankly, "Here I am!" She had none of the petty jealousy which plain women often feel towards beauties. She longed for the gift of beauty, but she could admire it in others. One of her dearest friends was Madame Récamier, the celebrated belle, and she used to write to her lover-like epistles. "Dear Juliet," she says in one of them, "my heart beats with the pleasure of seeing you. With reverence do I kiss your lovely face."

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The opening of the States General, on the 5th of May, 1789—a measure proposed by Necker in the hope of tranquillizing the people by giving them a voice in the Government—was a memorable day in Madame de Staël's life. From the window she watched the twelve hundred deputies on their way to the Church of St. Louis to hear Mass; everywhere she heard her father hailed as the first of men, the saviour of his country, and she shed tears of joy. But events rapidly thickened. In July, Necker was dismissed. M. and Madame de Staël followed him and his wife to Brussels, and when Madame de Staël saw him, covered with dust, but calm as he had been in prosperity, she knelt at his feet in a transport of admiration and love. The taking of the Bastille soon followed, and Necker was recalled from Bâle to Paris. His progress was a triumph. Women knelt in the road as he passed; men unyoked the horses and drew his carriage. When he stood on the balcony of the Hotel de Ville and spoke to the excited crowd, Madame de Staël fainted with joy. "When I returned to consciousness," she said, "I felt I had reached the limits of all possible happiness."

Not much more than a year afterwards, Necker resigned, and returned to Coppet, on the Lake of Geneva. His power was over, but his daughter's was not. She became leader of the Feuillants, or friends of the Constitution. By her influence the witty and handsome Count Narbonne was made Minister of War. Hers was the masculine, his was the feminine mind. Busy tongues had plenty to say about her and the attractive Count. Such stories may have been false; one thing is certain—that Madame de Staël, always open-hearted and rash, cared too little for public opinion. Count de Narbonne's power lasted but a few months. He and another aristocrat were obliged to hide in the Swedish Ambassador's hotel, and when the commissaire came to make a search, Madame de Staël fought him with her nimble tongue, and convinced him of the danger of offending a

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foreign ambassador. He retired, and the Count escaped to England.

On the terrible 2nd of September, 1792, Madame de Staël herself tried to leave Paris. The tocsin was sounding as she set out in the ambassador's coach and six. It had a coat of arms—symbol of hated aristocracy—and it was stopped by the crowd, and brought to the Hotel de Ville. As Madame de Staël ascended the steps, she passed through a wall of pikes and lances. A lance was even directed at her head, which might have proved fatal if it had not been warded off by a gendarme who had promised to protect her. For six hours she and her maid were locked up in a room, "dying of hunger, thirst, and fright." The window looked out on the Place de Grève, and they could see the blood-stained figures returning from the prisons, and hear the savage shout, "Vive la nation! A la guillotine!"

At last, owing to the influence of Manuel, Madame de Staël was released. A gendarme escorted her to the Swiss frontier, and in 1793 she took refuge at Juniper Hall, in Surrey. Here she became queen of a little colony of French emigrants. Talleyrand, Count de Narbonne, M. d'Arblay, and Madame de la Châtre were of the party; and Miss Burney, who was staying close by with her sister, Mrs. Phillips, paid constant visits to Juniper Hall. "Madame de Staël," she writes, "is one of the first women I have ever met for abilities and extraordinary intellect. Like Mrs. Thrale, but with infinitely more depth." Madame de Staël wrote English notes to hope that "miss burney will spend a large week in that house." One day, Lally Tollendal read out his tragedy of *Strafford;* another day, Madame de Staël was very gay, and M. de Talleyrand very "comique." He told her that she read prose very badly; she had a cadence, a monotony, "qu'il n'est pas bien du tout." She was hurt that Fanny Burney would not come and stay with her; said that it was like a girl of fourteen to be under guardianship, and sobbed as she parted from her English friends. Simple,

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frank, eager to love, eager to talk, eager to admire, she had an irresistible charm in spite of her abruptness and eccentricity. She was fond of studying herself, was curious about her own feelings, and constantly used the expression, "Such is my character, my nature." Others shared in the same inspection. "If I were going to the scaffold," she said, "I could not help passing judgment on the friends that accompanied me." She detected every one's weak side, and her dissecting knife spared none, only leaving her father untouched.

When the Directory began its reign in 1795, Baron de Staël resumed his office as ambassador, and his wife, with her three children, two sons and a daughter, returned to Paris from Coppet. She was again leader of the Constitutional party, now represented by her friend, Benjamin Constant. Her enmity with Napoleon soon began. She had written him some very high-flown letters, in which she declared that she, and not the commonplace Josephine, was fitted to understand his genius. He did not reply, and from that hour war between the two set in. Almost every one knows his celebrated repartee to her question, "Which woman do you consider to be the greatest?" "She, Madame, who has given to the state the greatest number of children."

At this time she had published her book on the *Influence of the Passions*, which was followed, in 1800, by her work, *De la Litterature*, and two years afterwards, by her first novel, *Delphine*. The motto on the title-page was a saying of Madame Necker's, that "a man must know how to brave opinion, a woman how to submit to it." Delphine, a beautiful and attractive young widow, is the creature of impulse. She gives an estate to the daughter of her charming, but treacherous cousin, Madame de Vernon, in order that this daughter, Mathilde, may marry a certain Léonce de Mondeville, to whom she is betrothed. Léonce is a perfect hero of romance; proud, refined, and sentimental. The moment he and Delphine meet they fall in love; but the wily Madame de Vernon is determined that this sudden passion shall not

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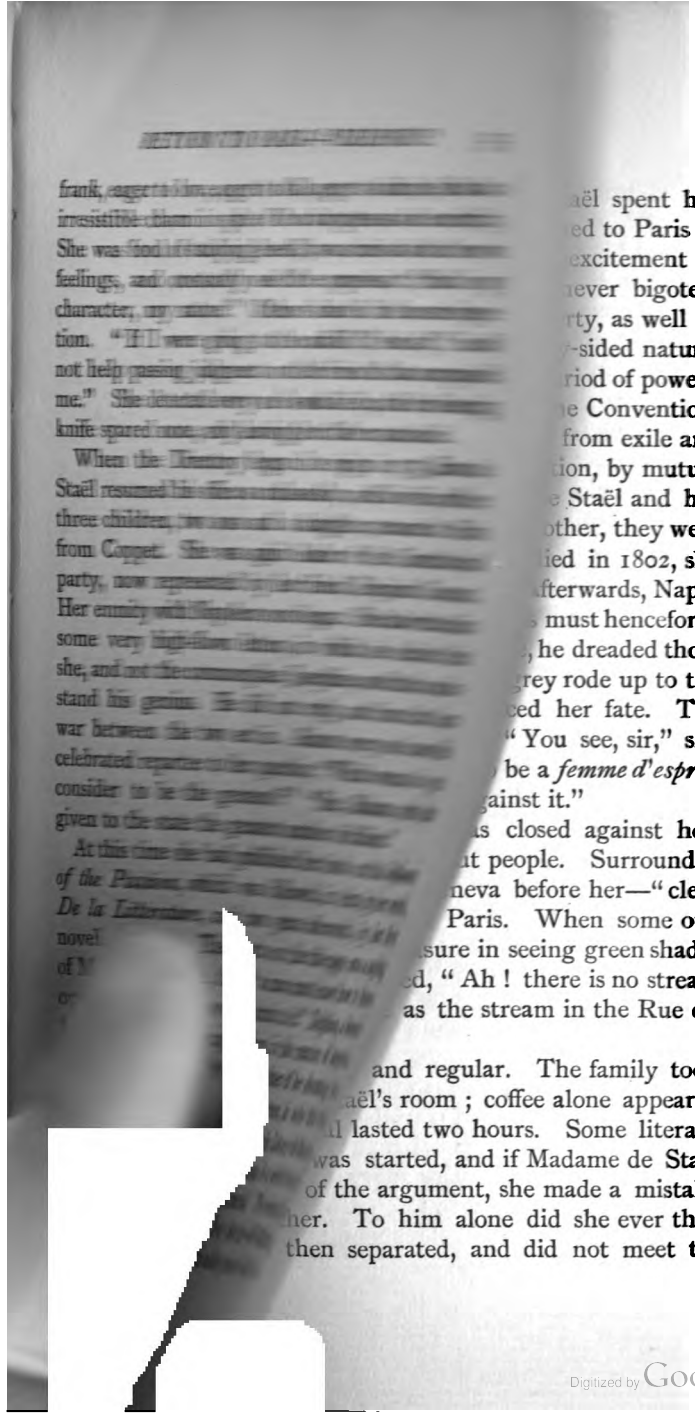

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prevent Léonce from marrying her daughter. She misrepresents Delphine's conduct, works on the pride and jealousy of Léonce till at length he marries Mathilde. Delphine is standing behind a pillar, and witnesses the ceremony. Then follows the despair of Léonce, when he finds he has been deceived by Madame de Vernon. He has no love for Mathilde. Not to see Delphine—to do without her—is torture. They meet constantly, and he threatens to kill himself, if she does not take an oath which he dictates. She listens, and is lost. Her reputation is ruined. Women shun her, men insult her. She flies to Switzerland, and escapes to a convent, where she takes vows. At Mathilde's death, Léonce seeks her, and threatens to commit suicide if she does not become his wife. So she leaves the convent with him ; but the finger of scorn is pointed at the disgraced nun. Léonce leaves her and joins the Royalist forces, he is made prisoner of war at Verdun, and is sentenced to be shot. Delphine finds him in the dungeon, spends her last hours with him, takes poison, and is buried with him in the same grave. Such is the very hysterical and morbid plot of Madame de Staël's first novel. She afterwards altered the conclusion, and made Delphine die a natural death ; but even so, the six volumes are full of exaggerated sentiment, and of noble thoughts perverted to wrong ends. The idea of restraint, of submission to law and duty, of resignation to the Divine will, is wholly wanting. *Delphine* drew down a storm of blame as well as praise on Madame de Staël's head. It was the only book she ever revised, but no revision could alter the effect—it must always remain a history of passion, not of true love, which desires the good and not the evil of the beloved one. Some of the characters are tolerably well drawn, Madame de Vernon and Delphine especially ; but Madame de Staël, who knew men so intimately in real life, could not paint them in her books. Léonce is a poor creature, not a man at all—he has no character, no individuality, no life.

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After her mother's death, Madame de Staël spent her summers at Coppet with her father, but returned to Paris in the winter. The movement, the variety, the excitement of the capital was necessary to her. She was never bigoted, never a mere party leader; the friends of liberty, as well as the lovers of order, were welcome to her many-sided nature. During the reign of the Directory she had a period of power; Barras was her friend, she was denounced in the Convention, and by her influence Talleyrand was recalled from exile and made Minister of Foreign Affairs. A separation, by mutual consent, had taken place between Madame de Staël and her husband: they had no enmity against each other, they were simply better friends apart; and when he died in 1802, she was with him to close his eyes. The year afterwards, Napoleon banished her from Paris—forty leagues must henceforth divide her from it. He dreaded her tongue, he dreaded those réunions at her salons; and so a man in grey rode up to the gate of her country house, and announced her fate. The gendarme spoke politely of her books. "You see, sir," she answered, "what it leads a woman to, to be a *femme d'esprit.* Pray advise the ladies of your family against it."

Paris was her Paradise, and it was closed against her. Nature could not content her without people. Surrounded by mountains, with the Lake of Geneva before her—"clear placid Léman"—she still pined for Paris. When some one said that she must take great pleasure in seeing green shades and shining streams, she answered, "Ah! there is no stream which is worth as much to me as the stream in the Rue du Bac."

Life at Coppet was calm and regular. The family took breakfast in Madame de Staël's room; coffee alone appeared on the table, but the meal lasted two hours. Some literary or philosophic subject was started, and if Madame de Staël was getting the better of the argument, she made a mistake in favour of her father. To him alone did she ever thus yield. The guests then separated, and did not meet till

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dinner, which was enlivened by M. Necker's quarrels with his "old, deaf, and grumbling" men-servants, who had followed his fortunes to Coppet in their embroidered coats. At seven, M. Necker had his whist, long quarrels followed with his daughter, they left off vowing never to play again, and forgot all about it the next day. The rest of the evening was spent in conversation—that supreme joy of Madame de Staël's life.

She confessed to M. Molé that she would not open her window to see the Bay of Naples for the first time, though she would gladly travel five hundred leagues to talk with a new and brilliant mind. It was this that brought her to Germany in 1804. She wanted to find noble characters and to learn something of German literature. She brought a first-rate cook with her, and it was said that she might be sure of success, for she went preceded by her reputation and followed by her cook. One of her halting-places was Weimar. Here she saw Schiller, and his verdict on her was, "She is all of one piece, there is no false speck about her. Therefore one is perfectly at ease with her, can hear all from her, and say all to her. She has a clearness, decision, and rich vivacity of nature. Only one grievance is the altogether unprecedented glibness of tongue, you must make yourself all ear if you will follow her." Goethe was not quite so favourably impressed. "She dashes in," he says, "without note or warning, fells you with a club, and the next minute you must begin piping tunes for her, and jig them from subject to subject." Yet he allows that sometimes she shows in the most brilliant manner her talent of thinking and replying.

It was during this German journey that she lost her father. She heard of his danger, travelled from Berlin in a fever of anxiety, and heard of his death at Weimar. The news came like a shock. She was very angry if any one said he was old, and when some visitors to Coppet were upset in a ditch, she troubled herself very little about their bruises; her only

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thought was that Richel, the coachman who drove them, might have overturned her father in the same way. If any success came to her, she said, "My father obtained that for me." She invoked him in all her prayers; she always wore his miniature, and never parted with it, except when her daughter, the Duchesse de Broglie, was ill; then she sent it to her, and told her to look at it while she was in pain. She had a tenderness to all old men—she seemed to see her father in them; and to those who were old and poor she was lavish. To her own children she was fond but firm, and they loved her passionately and proudly.

Careless of the future, so that her father said she was like the savages, who sell their huts in the morning, and know not where to sleep at night, yet when his great fortune came to her, she managed it prudently and well. After M. Necker's death, she went to Italy, and to this visit we owe *Corinne*. She frankly admits that in both *Delphine* and *Corinne* she had no other model but herself. *Delphine* is the embodiment of passion and impulse; *Corinne* of genius. Lord Nelvil, a cold, reserved Scotchman, travelling in Italy, is struck by the sight of Corinne crowned at the Capitol. There is something in this scene, in the public recognition of genius, which was peculiarly to the taste of Madame de Staël. She loved applause herself—it was the breath of her nostrils, and she knew well what it was. In Germany a crowd of men gathered and pressed around her, so that peevish little Bettina said, "Your adorers stifle me." But Corinne, in the moment of *her* triumph, falls a victim to love. She sees Lord Nelvil, and his noble, melancholy air "charms her at once." In order to keep him by her side, she takes him out sight-seeing in Rome. She inundates him with talk about literature and art, so that pages of Corinne read like an inspired guide-book. He listens and loves, but at the same time he doubts if the brilliant and independent Corinne will make him a suitable wife. Ultimately, he marries her half-sister,

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Lucile. Broken down in health, Corinne, who has followed him to England, returns to die. She takes five years to die; and her story now becomes infinitely sad and touching. Her genius is slowly leaving her, the past is full of stings; gaiety, grace, imagination are gone. The happiness of a day is as difficult as the destiny of an entire life. When Oswald, with his wife Lucile, come to Florence, she will not see him till her last breath is passing.

Corinne is the history of a woman's soul—of a woman of genius, strong to feel, to love, and above all, to suffer. It reveals everything—not a shade is passed over. It is no wonder that it made a sensation, even in the busy time of war. At Edinburgh we are told that learned and scientific men stopped in the streets to talk of the new novel. When once a book was finished, Madame de Staël troubled her head no more about it, but let it make its way as well as it could. She often forgot what she had written, and if an expression was quoted to her, she said, "Did I, indeed, write that? I am quite charmed with it. It is excellently well expressed."

After a second visit to Germany, she wrote her celebrated book, *De L'Allemagne*. Germany had been considered a land of barbarians; Madame de Staël was one of the first who broke down the Chinese wall of prejudice which separated it from the rest of Europe, and showed the rich mines of thought which were contained in the works of Goethe and Schiller. "In France," she very truly says, "people study men; in Germany, books." Unlike most women, she had the faculty of criticism, which enabled her to judge and compare what she read and saw.

Ten thousand copies of *De L'Allemagne* were printed at Blois; but, by Napoleon's orders, they were seized by the police, under the plea that it was an anti-national work. Madame de Staël was very patient under the blow. When she was told that General Savary had sent the edition to the mill, in order to be converted into pasteboard, she said, "I

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wish, at least, that he would send me the pasteboard for my bonnets."

Her favourite amusement at Coppet was acting plays; a classical costume showed off her fine figure and her beautiful arms to advantage. She acted with so much energy and passion, that she could never take off the cross which she wore in the part of Zaïre without breaking it. When she heard M. Guizot utter the names of Nero and Tacitus, she seized his arm, and said, "I am sure you would act tragic parts very well; stay with us, and appear in Andromaque." But M. Guizot—unlike the German poet, Werner, and the Danish poet, Œhlenschlager—was able to resist the marvellous power of Madame de Staël's look, and said, "No."

It was in 1811 that the curious romance of her second marriage took place with a young Italian of good family, named Rocca. He had fought with the French army in Spain, and came to Geneva to recover from his wounds. He was pale, spectral looking, hardly able to stand, but still handsome. As Madame de Staël passed him, she gave him a smile of pity, and spoke kindly to him. The rich tones of her voice acted like magic; henceforth she was the goddess of his affections—the young man of twenty-seven worshipped the woman of forty-five. "I will love her so much," said he, "that she will marry me in the end." "She is old enough to be your mother," said a prudent friend. "I am glad," replied M. Rocca, "that you have given me another reason for loving her."

Though Madame de Staël had refused her faithful admirer, Benjamin Constant, she married young Rocca. She was weary of loneliness, and the dream of her life had always been love in marriage. At last, in the autumn of her days, it was realized. She used to say, "I will oblige my daughter to marry for love," and the same fate now came to herself. With M. Rocca she found the most chivalrous tenderness, and he had a sort of unexpected wit, which gave variety to her life. But she would not openly confess the marriage; she

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dreaded ridicule, and could not bear to change the name she had made so celebrated. No household dame could have been more anxious about her husband than she was at Pisa, where he seemed on the point of death; she compared herself to Marshal Ney, who was then expecting his sentence every day. "One sole unhappiness in life," she said, "the loss of a beloved object."

She, her husband and daughter, travelled to Vienna and then to St. Petersburg, where she was well received by the Emperor Alexander. Returning by way of Sweden, she began her work, *Dix Annés d'Exile*, and arrived in London in 1813. She was the great lioness of that season; to hear her talk, to catch sight of her yellow turban, was something to be proud of. She admired English literature intensely. One of her favourite scenes was the burial scene from *The Antiquary*, and she said that Lord Byron's poems had renewed her existence. Byron himself allowed that "the Begum of Literature," as Moore called her, was very good-natured; but he bitterly complained of the time she stayed after dinner, "the gentlemen wish Mrs. Corinne in the drawing-room."

When the Duke of Marlborough, who had not spoken for three years, heard that she was coming to Blenheim, he said, "Take me away!" So her glibness of tongue had some disadvantages as well as advantages.

Her stay in London was saddened by the loss of her second son, who was killed in a duel. After the fall of Napoleon, she would have settled at Paris; but, to her great annoyance, the Royal Family did not treat her with any consideration: the king called her a "Chateaubriand in petticoats;" the Duchess d'Angoulême pretended never to see her; and the rest of the court openly attacked her. The million of francs, that "sacred debt," lent by her father to the State, was at length handed over by order of Louis XVIII., but it cost her 400,000 francs to recover it, besides a set of diamonds.

Mademoiselle Cochelet gives an interesting account of

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the visit of Madame de Staël and her friend Madame de Récamier to Queen Hortense. The two ladies arrived.

"The somewhat mulatto-like expression of Madame de Staël's face," says Mademoiselle de Cochelet, "combined with the originality of her dress, and her bare shoulders, either of which might have been considered handsome if looked at separately, seemed to realize badly the ideal figure which we had conceived of the authoress of *Delphine* and *Corinne*. I had hoped to behold in her one of those heroines she so admirably sketched, and I stood speechless with disappointment. But after the first feeling of regret, I could not but acknowledge that her eyes were beautiful, yet it remained a secret to me how her face could ever have allowed love to find a resting-place there, and yet she was said to have frequently inspired it."

After a drive through the park, where the ladies got a wetting from a thunder-shower, they re-arranged their toilettes, and dinner came. Madame de Staël's servant had put the well-known twig by her plate, and the more animated the conversation became, the more she gesticulated and maltreated her twig. All sorts of topics, politics and metaphysics, came easily to her fluent tongue. She spoke about Queen Hortense's poem. "Fais ce que tu dois, advienne qu'il pourra" (Do what is right, happen what may), and, turning to the Queen, she said, "During the time of my exile, which you so generously strove to shorten, I often used to sing this song, and think of you." As she said this, her face was so radiant with emotion that it might be called beautiful.

A striking trait in her character is told by Madame de Saussure. It was proposed to play proverbs, and a sketch called *Le Bavard* (The Prater) was selected, in which a great lady, ill and nervous, consents to use her interest in favour of an old soldier, who is soliciting a pension, but on the express condition that he states his case as briefly as possible. The Prater, who is duly cautioned beforehand,

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nevertheless indulges in so many words that he exhausts the patience of his patroness, and she will have nothing more to say to him. Madame de Staël was the great lady. She acted the part very well: first languor, next weariness, then impatience; but when the time came for inflicting pain on the old soldier, she found it impossible to bring herself to do it. He had spoken of his wife and children, he was a good man, she could not refuse him. She left her assumed character, and quite spoiling the point of the piece, she told him in future not to talk so much, but that she would undertake his suit.

She was incapable of giving pain to any one. Though subject to *ennui*, she felt none when she could be really useful to others. One of her last acts was to intercede for the life of a condemned criminal, and for the second time she succeeded. There was a tenderness, a lively gratitude in her feelings towards those who amused her. A *bon-mot*, a comic story was a little benefit to her, but affectation or prosing commonplaces she detested. "Imitation," she says, "is a sort of death; it kills originality." She could still write when reading was impossible. "I comprehend nothing of what I read," she said, "so I am obliged to write."

The life of M. Rocca, so frail apparently, lasted six months longer than her own. Her illness was not long. "I have always been the same, lively or sad," she said to Chateaubriand. "I have loved God, my father, and liberty." Death gave her no alarm; she even wished to dictate to Schlegel the description of what she felt. "My father waits for me on the other shore," she said. She beheld her father in God, and in God Himself could see nothing but a Father.

Speaking of metaphysics she said, "I prefer the Lord's Prayer to it all." During the long periods of sleeplessness, she used to repeat this prayer incessantly in order to calm her mind. Sighs and exclamations frequently escaped her, such as "Ah! life, life. Poor human nature! What are we?" One day, rousing from a state of reverie she said, "I

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think I know what a transition from life to death is, and I am sure that the goodness of God softens it to us, our ideas become confused, and our pain is not very acute." Every day a looking-glass was brought to her that she might see the progress which disease and years had made in her sunken features. Her last moments were peaceful. She expired at Paris on the 14th of July, 1817, at the age of fifty-one.

It was after her death that her celebrated book, *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, was published. Few people were so well qualified to pronounce on the causes that led to that event as she was. From her Swiss ancestors, she had inherited a love of liberty, along with a hatred of despotism. She was a disciple of Rousseau, and yet she stood alone, with characteristic generosity, to try and save the life of Marie Antoinette.

Throughout her career we see the traces of a great heroic soul, often falling, full of mistakes, extravagances, and errors, and yet with no tinge of littleness, ever aspiring, always open to conviction, always single in aim, full of enthusiasm, sympathy, and love. Such a woman often places herself open to ridicule, but she remains above ridicule. "She would have made a great man," says Byron, when he became intimate with her at Geneva during the spring of 1816. But is it not something that at a time when the abilities of women were slighted and scorned that this woman should have maintained her right as a queen of intellect? In her eyes sat an empire, and around her she drew subjects, who willingly or unwillingly, were obliged to confess her superiority.

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IV.

MRS. BARBAULD.

1743–1825.

Birth at Kibworth—An importunate wooer—Early poems—Society at Warrington—Marriage with Mr. Barbauld—School-keeping—Settles at Hampstead—Stoke Newington—Insanity of Mr. Barbauld—Literary work—Old age and death.

IF we try to remember what we know about Mrs. Barbauld, it is just probable that a vision of torn lesson-books, which were formerly used by our grand-aunts or grand-mothers, may rise before us. These remnants of bygone schooldays have spent many a long year on dusty book-shelves; they are adorned by rude frontispieces, representing little maidens setting off to their daily tasks in the enormous skyward-pointing hats of the beginning of the nineteenth century; queer satchels swing on their arms, which are distorted by huge leg-of-mutton sleeves that contrast strangely with the skimpy skirts which flap against the legs of the little wearers. To these little maidens, Mrs. Barbauld was the most familiar of all familiar names, her *Early Lessons* and *Hymns in Prose for Children* were their first introduction to literature. At that time there were no *Little Arthur's Histories*, no *Reading Without Tears*, no *Mary's Grammar;* all was tough, hard, and indigestible, and but for Mrs. Barbauld, the dry bread of elementary know-

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ledge would have remained in the same state for anoth[He] twenty years. Mrs. Barbauld, however, was not merely [his] writer of children's books, she was also a good classical scholar, a poet, an essayist, the friend and correspondent of Maria Edgeworth, of Hannah More, of Samuel Rogers, and of the great Mrs. Montagu.

In Wordsworth's estimation she was the first of literary women, and Fox and Dr. Johnson both expressed their disapproval of her "wasting her talents in writing books for children." Waste, indeed! As she very truly says, "To plant the first idea in a human mind can be no dishonour to any hand."

Mrs. Barbauld's maiden name was Aikin. She was the eldest child and only daughter of Dr. Aikin and Jane, his wife, and was born at the village of Kibworth Howard, in Leicestershire, on June 20, 1743. Her father was a dissenter, and assistant master at a small school. Anna Letitia had an only brother, afterwards Dr. Aikin, who distinguished himself by writing and compiling a great variety of books.

One of these—*Evenings at Home*—is still popular, and out of the ninety-nine pieces in the volume, Mrs. Barbauld, his sister, contributed fourteen. Dr. Johnson in one of his jocose moods, forgetful of his own axiom "that a man who would make a pun would pick a pocket," spoke of Dr. Aikin as an "aching (Aikin) void," but all the same he seems to have had a genuine esteem for him.

The little girl, Anna Letitia, was a marvel of juvenile precocity. Dean Swift tells us that he could read any chapter in the Bible at the age of three, but Mrs. Barbauld was more than a match for him. At two years of age, her mother says, she could read sentences and little stories, in her wise book, roundly, without spelling, and in half a year more could read as well as most women. Her mother thought that there were only two alternatives for a girl brought up at a boy's school, either to be a prude or a hoyden. "She preferred her daughter to be a prude, and it was owing to

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training that Mrs. Barbauld never appeared at her ease," her niece, Miss Lucy Aikin, tells us, "nor felt so, as she has often told me, in general society. She was humble and ceremonious to strangers to a degree which provoked one, and they often said they could not be afraid of her, she was so unassuming."

In one of Mrs. Barbauld's letters she complained of her awkwardness about common things, partly owing to her having had no sisters or companions of her own sex. One thing she seems to have learned from her boy associates, and that was great bodily activity. She was evidently made for a tom boy, and her lively spirit struggled hard against the tight rein that held her in. "London cousins were lost in wonder at the gymnastic feats of this country lass." She was little more than a child when she gave a strange and amusing proof of her agility. In order to appreciate this, something must first be said of her appearance. Not only was she gifted with talent, but with beauty; it is seldom that the two go together, in her case they did, Venus as well as Mercury smiled on her birth. When she was fifteen, her father removed from Kibworth to Warrington, where he was appointed tutor of languages and literature at a newly-founded academy. His daughter's appearance is described at this time as follows: "Her person was slender, her complexion exquisitely fair, with the bloom of perfect health, her features were regular and elegant, and her dark-blue eyes beamed with the light of wit and fancy." From a cameo likeness, done subsequently by her friend Wedgwood, we see that this high flown description did her no more than justice. A long graceful neck supports a small, well-shaped head, adorned with a profusion of long, curling hair.

About the whole *pose* of face and features, there is a dignity, a classic elegance which is most uncommon and striking. It was small wonder, then, that the fifteen-years-old maiden had already made a conquest. So it proved. Mr. Haynes, a rich farmer of Kibworth, followed her to

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Warrington, smitten deeply by her manifold attractions. He obtained a private interview with her father, and begged his consent to make her his wife. For an answer he heard that the young lady was walking in the garden, and that he might press his suit himself. The farmer obeyed. He urged, he argued, he pleaded, till at length the unwilling fair one became so weary of him and his importunity, that she nimbly climbed up a tree that grew by the garden wall, and let herself down into the lane beyond. The poor suitor was left alone to gape helplessly after his Dulcinea, and to feel that he was—sold!

Here is a wrinkle indeed for novelists in search of a new and telling tableau.

A lesson in constancy was, however, to be learned from the faithful rejected farmer. He went home all forlorn, lived and died a bachelor; and the "Works of Mrs. Barbauld," splendidly bound, were the only volumes that he was ever known to buy. After this, who will scoff at the faithless inconstancy of men?

The fair Anna Letitia seems, indeed, to have been a sort of conquering heroine, carrying devastation to all hearts that came in her way. Three or four of her lovers never ceased to look upon her with affection as well as admiration. Her niece, Lucy Aikin, in one of her pompous sentences, says that her aunt's conversation had a charm inexpressible; it was distinguished by wit, playful wit, tempered with true feminine softness and the gentle dignity of a high mind.

It was at Warrington, in 1773, that Miss Aikin first came out as an authoress. Strange to say, her volume of poems at once met with a triumphant success. Unlike most young literary scribblers, who have generally to wait and toil and struggle through many a weary year, the reviewers were full of praise, and letters of congratulations poured in from all sides. The subject of one of these poems was "Corsica," and as public attention was then much drawn to those "noble islanders" struggling for their liberty against the French,

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this particular poem was signalled out for enthusiastic notice. One person read it not only with admiration, but astonishment; and Dr. Priestley, in a letter to Miss Aikin, implores her to send it to Boswell ("Corsica" Boswell, Johnson's biographer), and to have it printed separately for the benefit of the Corsicans. "Paoli, who reads English," he adds, "will cause it to be printed in every history of that renowned island."

The great Mrs. Montagu, the *ci-devant* beauty, the female Mæcenas who threw the ægis of her protection wherever she chose, was not behindhand in her congratulations. She wrote a long letter to the new authoress, crammed full of high-sounding platitudes and fine Johnsonian sentences.

"I am much pleased," she magnificently says, "with the hope you give me of adding so valuable an ornament to my friends as Miss Aikin. I always wish to find great virtues where there are great talents, and to love what I admire, so to tell you the truth, I made many inquiries into your character as soon as I was acquainted with your works, and it gave me infinite pleasure to find the moral character returned the lustre it received from the mental accomplishments. Your essays have made me still more intimately acquainted with the turn of your mind, more sincerely your friend, and more warmly your admirer. I dare not repeat to you what I have said of them to others; what might have the appearance of flattery would set me at a distance from the friendship to which I aspire."

After expressing a wish to see her correspondent in London, she goes on to say "If any work appears in the literary world which you would wish to have conveyed to you, favour me at any time with your commands. Your style is so classical that I imagine your father's study chiefly abounds in old books; if anything new excites your curiosity, let me have the pleasure of conveying it to you."

The letter concludes with this splendid postscript of com-

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pliments: "I made my friend, General Paoli, very happy by presenting him with your Poems. The Muses crown virtue when Fortune refuses to do it."

But Fortune did *not* refuse.

The first volume of Miss Aikin's Poems passed through four editions in twelve months, and was followed by another book, to which her brother contributed. The title of it was '*Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose, by J. and A. L. Aikin.*' Another success awaited this new venture, and it has been reprinted several times.

The young authoress was now fairly on the ladder of fame, and though she once observed that she had never been placed in a situation which suited her, these years at Warrington were perhaps the happiest of her life. She and her mother, who is described as being neat, punctual, and strict, did not get on well together, and the home atmosphere must have had something of "puritanical rigour" about it. But still she had the cultivated companionship of her father, her brother, of the tutors at the academy, and of her numerous admirers. The tutors took boarders into their houses at £15 a year for those who had two months' vacation, and £18 for those who had no vacation. These terms did not include tea, washing, fire, or candles, yet even so, they are enough to startle the ideas of modern schoolmasters. Distinguished personages often paid a visit to Warrington and its academy. Here came Howard the philanthropist, in order that the younger Aikin might revise his MSS. and correct his proofs. Here came Roscoe, of Liverpool, who first learned to care for botany from his visits to the Warrington Botanical Gardens; Currie, the biographer of Burns; and many others, mostly Presbyterian ministers, paid their *devoirs* to Warrington, which was then called the Athens of the county. Besides these grave notabilities, there were younger and more joyous spirits.

"We have a knot of lasses just after your own heart," writes Mrs. Barbauld, then Miss Aikin, to her friend, Miss

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Belsham, "as merry, blithe, and gay as you could wish, and very smart and clever; two of them are the Miss Rigbys. We have a West Indian family, too, that I think you would like, a young couple who seem intended for nothing but mirth, frolic, and gaiety."

This little circle was, however, soon dispersed. Miss Lizzie Rigby married Mr. Burney; Miss Sally Rigby was wooed and wedded by Dr. Parry, of Bath; and the lively West Indian had to run away from his creditors, and abandon Warrington for ever.

Even the bright particular star, the fair poetess herself, was to leave the scene of her triumphs, her fate had indeed come. A pupil had been received at the academy, Rochemont Barbauld by name, who was descended from a family of Huguenots. After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, his father, then a boy, was concealed in a cask, carried on board ship, and brought to England. On the marriage of one of the daughters of George II. to the Elector of Hesse, Mr. Barbauld was appointed their chaplain, and attended the newly-married pair to Cassel. Here, Rochemont was born, and when the household of the Electress was broken up, he came to England with his father, who intended him to be a clergyman of the Church of England. If this were the case, the father's proceeding in sending his son to a Dissenting academy at Warrington, seems rather a strange one. Things turned out as might have been expected. Young Barbauld changed his opinions, gave up all idea of taking orders in the Church, and fell desperately in love with the charming Miss Aikin! What her feelings to him were, seem a mystery. Her niece, Lucy Aikin, says that her attachment to him was "the illusion of a romantic fancy, not of a tender heart;" while her father ascribed the ill-starred union to the injurious influence of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloise*, then a new revelation to the reading public. Mr. Barbauld played the part of St. Preux to this Warrington Julie. It was not so very strange, after all,

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MRS. BARBAULD.

BORN JUNE 20TH, 1743; DIED MARCH 9TH, 1825.

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that some unexpected chord should have been touched in the heart of this shy, quiet maiden, accustomed only to strict puritanical ways; and that Mr. Barbauld's "crazy demonstrations of rapture, set off with theatrical French manners," should have been more acceptable to her than her relations could possibly have imagined. But the worst of all was, that Mr. Barbauld had a strong taint of insanity. Miss Aikin was warned of this by a friend, and told that he had already had an attack. Her answer was peculiar and characteristic. "If I were now to disappoint him," she said, "he would certainly go mad." So, with a sort of desperate generosity, to use her niece's words, "she rushed on her melancholy destiny."

Mrs. Barbauld did not, perhaps, regret her choice so much as her friends seem to have done. Even they allow that a more upright, generous, benevolent, or independent spirit than Mr. Barbauld's could not exist, but his fits of insane fury were frightful to witness. What Mrs. Barbauld's sufferings were with such a husband, no one ever knew. Children, fortunately, they had none, and a year or so after their marriage, they adopted the son of Mrs. Barbauld's brother, her nephew, Charles, and took him home to live with them. He had so much cleverness, intelligence, and affection, that Mrs. Barbauld loved him as if he had been her own child, and he was a constant source of pride and pleasure to her. At first, her husband seemed everything that could be desired. He accepted the charge of a Dissenting congregation at Palgrave, in Suffolk, and opened a boys' school there. Mrs. Barbauld entered with the greatest enthusiasm on her share of the work. She kept all the accounts of the school and of the house, she wrote charming lectures on geography and history, and took the entire charge of a class of little boys. The first Lord Denman, Sir William Gell, Dr. Sayers, and William Taylor, of Norwich, were among her pupils, and it was for them and her nephew, Charles, that she wrote her *Early Lessons* and *Hymns in Prose.*

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After eleven years of keeping school, Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld gave it up. They spent a year on the Continent and another in London, and finally settled at Hampstead. Here they took one or two pupils, and Mr. Barbauld accepted an invitation to perform duty at a small chapel. Mrs. Barbauld thought Hampstead the pleasantest "village" about London, though, except Avignon, it was the most windy place she had ever been in. The house where they lived still stands, immediately above Rosslyn Terrace. It was then surrounded by fields, all vanished long ago, and Mr. Barbauld was often prevented from going to town by the state of the roads, and the passengers by the stage-coach were always obliged to walk up the hill. The road between Hampstead and Highgate was "delightfully pleasant," lying along Lord Mansfield's fine woods and the Earl of Southampton's *ferme ornée*. "Lady Mansfield and Lady Southampton," writes Mrs. Barbauld, "are both admirable dairywomen, and so jealous of each other's fame in that particular, that they have had many heart-burnings, and have once or twice been very near a serious falling out. The dispute was which of them could make the greatest quantity of butter from a certain number of cows."

There seems to have been plenty of pleasant society in the place, and beside Mrs. Barbauld there was another female celebrity, Joanna Baillie, author of *Plays on the Passions*. Mrs. Barbauld had read and admired her plays, but little dreamed that they were written by a young lady of Hampstead, whom she visited, and who came to Mr. Barbauld's chapel with as innocent a face as if she had never written a line.

While at Hampstead, Mrs. Barbauld wrote several of her prose essays, and a poem, addressed to Wilberforce, on the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Hannah More calls it an incomparable poem ; she could not help writing to express her delight, her gratitude, her admiration ; to send her own in return, was like keeping up the African trade of beads

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and bits of glass in exchange for gold and ivory. Such were the compliments that then passed between sister authoresses.

Hampstead was tolerably gay in those days. There was an assembly at the Long Room, to which Mrs. Barbauld invited young Mr. Samuel Rogers, the rising poet, and begged him also to come to dinner at "half after three;" quite an ordinary hour at that time for dinner-parties!

After living at Hampstead for thirteen or fourteen years, a change came. Dr. Aikin, Mrs. Barbauld's brother, who had been practising as a doctor in London, was attacked with a severe illness, which obliged him to give up his profession. He took a house at Stoke Newington, then a pretty rural village, and gave all his attention to literature. In order to be near him, Mrs. Barbauld persuaded her husband to leave Hampstead, and buy a house close to her brother's, and here she remained for the rest of her days. Stoke Newington was a favourite spot for Nonconformists to retire to. Dr. Watts lived the last thirty-six years of his life there, first under the hospitable roof of Sir Thomas Abney, and then of Lady Abney and her daughter. Here, too, Daniel Defoe (author of *Robinson Crusoe*), also a Dissenter, found a peaceful refuge. Mrs. Barbauld had not been long at Stoke Newington, when a correspondence with Maria Edgeworth and her father began. An acquaintance had sprung up between them some years before; letters had passed about a scheme of Mr. Edgeworth's, in which he wished Mrs. Barbauld to join. There was to be a "Lady's Paper," written entirely by ladies, no papers to be rejected, and each to be inserted in the order in which it was received. Mrs. Barbauld scouted the idea. "All the literary ladies!" she cried. "Have you ever reckoned up how many there are, or computed how much trash would be poured in?" So the plan fell to the ground, but the correspondence went on. Mr. Edgeworth tells Mrs. Barbauld that one of his little daughters had caught "something of the divine air" from her kisses; while Miss

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Edgeworth says that Pascal, who wore a girdle of spikes, which he pressed into himself whenever he was conscious of any feelings of vanity, would have had to press them very often, if he had been praised by Mrs. Barbauld.

While these civilities were passing, a sad tragedy was being acted out in Mrs. Barbauld's own life; far sadder than any Miss Edgeworth ever described with her nimble pen. The state of Mr. Barbauld's mind had gradually grown worse and worse.

One day, at dinner, he seized a knife from the table and pursued her round the room; she only escaped by springing from the window into the garden, and taking refuge in her brother's house. A separation then took place. Mr. Barbauld was removed to a house in London, and put under the care of a keeper. One day, he was unfortunately trusted with money. He bribed his attendant to let him walk out alone, so he went, and never returned. A search was made, and his lifeless body was found in the New River. What his wife felt at this melancholy crisis of her life may be seen by these touching lines addressed to him—

"Pure spirit, oh where art thou now?
Oh, whisper to my soul!
Oh, let some soothing thought of thee
This bitter grief control!

'Tis not for thee the tears I shed
Thy sufferings now are o'er,
The sea is calm, the tempest past,
On that eternal shore—

No more the storms that wrecked thy peace
Shall tear that gentle breast,
Nor summer's rage, nor winter's cold
Thy poor, poor frame molest.

Thy peace is sealed, thy rest is sure,
My sorrows are to come;
Awhile I weep and linger here
Then follow to the tomb.

* * * *

Oh, in some dream of visioned bliss
Some trance of rapture show,
Where, on the bosom of thy God,
Thou rest'st from human woe.

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* * * *

Farewell! with honour, peace, and love,
Be thy dear memory blest;
Thou hast no tears for me to shed
When I, too, am at rest."

Curiously enough, some years afterwards, Mrs. Barbauld's life was again in danger by the insanity of a Mr. Elton Hamond, a clever, handsome young man, who came to her with an introduction from the Edgeworths. He was a very frequent visitor, but after a time, he became strange in his manner, and in the end, he destroyed himself. Amongst his papers, Mr. Robinson, his executor, found one in which he discussed at great length "*the best way of putting an end to Mrs. Barbauld's life*—by poison, a sudden blow, shooting, stabbing," &c. &c.

Mrs. Barbauld found a relief from her sorrows by literary work. In 1810, she edited a collection of British novelists, with essays and critical notices on each, written by herself. It was about this time that Mr. Crabb Robinson made her acquaintance, and he gives an entertaining account of how it came about.

"One day, at a party when Mrs. Barbauld had been the subject of conversation, and I had spoken of her in enthusiastic terms, Miss Wakefield came to me and said, 'Would you like to know Mrs. Barbauld?' I exclaimed, 'You might as well ask me whether I would like to know the angel Gabriel!' She then called to Charles Aikin, whom she soon after married, and he said, 'I dine every Sunday with my aunt at Stoke Newington, and I am expected always to bring a friend with me. Two knives and forks are laid. Will you go with me next Sunday?' Gladly acceding to the proposal, I had the good fortune to make myself agreeable, and soon became intimate in the house. Mrs. Barbauld bore the remains of great personal beauty. She had a brilliant complexion, light hair, blue eyes, a small and elegant figure, and her manners were very agreeable, with something of the generation then departing. She received me very kindly,

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spoke of my aunt, and said that she had once slept at my father's house."

Mr. Robinson also mentions taking Wordsworth to meet Mrs. Barbauld at a party at Mr. Charles Aikin's, at which, "though rather a large one, he himself and the hostess were the only persons that were not authors."

He, at another time, took Charles Lamb and his sister to spend an afternoon with Mrs. Barbauld. One friend of his, an enthusiastic young American, who had been given a letter of introduction to Dr. Aikin, was shown into a room where the table was laid for dinner. With the eagerness of a true relic-hunter, he took some salt out of a salt-cellar, and pocketed it on the spot. When he told this anecdote of himself, Mrs. Aikin, who was rather deaf, understood him to say that he had put the salt-cellar into his pocket, and as it was a handsome old-fashioned silver one, she was filled with astonishment at this startling trait of American manners. Her mistake was, however, put right, and of course created a great deal of merriment.

A poem called "1811" was the last production of Mrs. Barbauld's pen which was given to the public during her life. It was very roughly treated by *The Quarterly Review* and the writer, who at the beginning of her career, had been greeted with so much applause, now found herself exposed to what her friend, Mr. Edgeworth, calls "An unjust, ungentlemanly, and insolent attack." Yet some think that this poem is superior to anything she ever published. The tone throughout is gloomy in the extreme. She prophesies that at some future day a traveller from the Antipodes will view the ruins of St. Paul's.

Every one will remember Macaulay's famous passage about the New Zealander standing on the ruined arch of Blackfriars Bridge, and it is probable that he had read Mrs. Barbauld's poem, and that it had left a trace in his memory, though he may have forgotten how or when it came there.

Mrs. Barbauld's description of the "ingenuous youth, whom

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Fancy fires, taking their pilgrimage from the Blue Mountains or Ontario's Lake," has some fine touches in it. "They came," she says,

> "With fond adoring steps to press the sod
> By statesmen, sages, poets, heroes trod."

At last, "London's faded glories" rise to view. They wander through each splendid square, and still untrodden street; they climb by broken stairs some crumbling turret, they trace the ancient bounds of scattered hamlets.

> "And choked no more with fleets, fair Thames survey,
> Through reeds and sedge pursue his idle way."

A peculiar honour was paid to another poem of Mrs. Barbauld's. Two lines of it—

> "Nor brush one cobweb from St. Paul's
> Lest it should shake the dome"—

were quoted in a Church debate in the House of Commons. The lines had never been printed, but the poem had been handed about by private friends.

Mrs. Barbauld lived to be eighty-two.

Mr. Crabb Robinson says of her at this time in his Diary, "She was in good spirits, but is now the confirmed old lady. Independently of her fine understanding and literary reputation, she would be interesting; her white locks, fair and unwrinkled skin, brilliant starched linen, and rich silk gown, make her a fit object for a painter. Her conversation is lively, her remarks judicious and always pertinent."

She died from an asthmatic complaint in 1825. A peaceful and gradual decline took her quietly away. After her death, one of the greatest tributes that could be paid to her literary talents were given by Wordsworth. Miss Lucy Aikin had published Mrs. Barbauld's works, and a copy had been given to Miss Wordsworth. Among the poems is a stanza on "Life" written in extreme old age. It begins thus:—

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"Life! I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part.
And when, or how, or where we met
I own to me's a secret yet.
But this I know, when thou art fled,
Where'er they lay these limbs, this head,
No clod so valueless shall be
As all that then remains of me."

The concluding verse is as follows :—

"Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather,
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 'twill cause a sigh, a tear;
Then steal away, give little warning.
Choose thine own time;
Say not good-night, but in some brighter clime,
Bid me good-morning."

"Long after I gave these works to Miss Wordsworth," says Mr. Crabb Robinson, "her brother said, 'Repeat me that stanza by Mrs. Barbauld.' I did so. He made me repeat it again, and so he learned it by heart. He was at the time walking in his sitting-room at Rydal, with his hands behind him, and I heard him mutter to himself, 'I am not in the habit of grudging people their good things, but I wish I had written these lines—

"'Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.'"

This same poem was also such a favourite with Madame D'Arblay, that she used to repeat it every evening during the latter years of her life.

That Mrs. Barbauld had humour as well as pathos is seen by an amusing little poem on the miseries of washing-day. It tells how

"E'er the first grey streak of dawn,
The red-armed washers come, and chase repose."

The very cat from the wet kitchen's reeking hearth visits the parlour. The silent breakfast is soon despatched; the only looks are given to the sky, for if rain should pour down,

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then adieu to quiet! Nothing would be mentioned but gravel stains, and loaded lines snapped short.

> "Saints have been calm while stretched upon the rack
> But never yet did housewife notable
> Greet with a smile a rainy washing day."

Cold wet sheets flap in the faces of any one who ventures on the garden path. Woe betide the unlucky visitor who stays to dine. Vainly he feeds his hopes on dinners of roast chicken, savoury pie, tart or pudding; the host ineffectively tries to kindle mirth; the unlucky guest in silence dines, and early slinks away. The work goes on briskly; all hands are employed to wash, to rinse, to wring, to fold, to starch, to clap, to iron or to plait. The truth of this well-sketched scene is admirably brought out, and shows Mrs. Barbauld's literary skill in a new light.

A long, high-sounding epitaph on a marble tablet is put up to her memory in Stoke Newington Chapel, but her best epitaph is in her works, and in the purity and unselfishness of her blameless life.

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V.

HANNAH MORE.

1745–1833.

Birth—Early scribbling—*The Search after Happiness*—Engagement to Mr. Turner—Visit to London—*Sir Eldred of the Bower*—London gaieties—*Percy*—Death of Garrick—Cowslip Green—Work at Cheddar—*Thoughts on the Manners of the Great*—Barley Wood—Little Tom Macaulay—*Cœlebs*—*The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*—Removes to Clifton—Death.

THE name of Hannah More seems to bring with it an atmosphere of Puritanism and austerity. If we think of her at all, we imagine her to have been a mixture of a blue-stocking and a bore, a stern moralist and a positive bug-bear to the rising generation of her time. In point of fact, she was a bright, clever woman; full of energy and active benevolence, abounding with life and vivacity; though serious, she was never austere; she relished wit in others, and had a considerable amount of it herself. At an age when a new reaction of religious feeling was setting in, she headed the movement, and it is much to her credit that she made fashionable ladies, whose ambition was then bounded by cards and dress, seriously consider if there was not something higher in life for them than odd tricks, and cheating their partners out of guineas and jewelled snuff-boxes.

The influence which Hannah More exerted over the upper ten thousand is the more remarkable when we consider that she rose from the ranks, and had nothing aristocratic about

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her whatsoever. Her father had the charge of the grammar school at Stapylton, near Bristol, and it was here that Hannah, the youngest but one of five daughters, was born in 1745. Her father's books had been lost in the journey from Norwich, so he taught his children history by word of mouth. All the More girls were very clever, but Hannah was the cleverest of the five. As soon as she could get hold of a scrap of paper, her delight was to scribble on it an essay or a poem with some well-directed moral. This scrap was afterwards hidden in a dark corner, where the servant kept her brushes and dusters. As Hannah's scraps of paper were soon exhausted, her greatest wish became that she might one day be rich enough to have a whole quire of paper to herself. Her mother, at last, bought the paper for her, and it was soon filled with imaginary letters to depraved characters, to reclaim them from their errors, and letters in return from them expressive of repentance and resolutions of amendment.

Hannah's little sister and confidante, Patty, who slept with her, was even more zealous than the future moralist herself about the preservation of some of these inspirations which usually came at night. The admiring little girl used to steal downstairs in the dark to get a candle, and write down the promptings of Hannah's muse on the first scrap of paper which could be found. Their mother was fond of telling what the children's favourite game was. Hannah used to make a carriage out of a chair, and then call her sisters to ride with her to London to see bishops and booksellers. Unlike many castles in the air, this childish vision was realized to the letter. During her life she paid thirty-seven visits to London.

The sisters seem to have been left to battle with the world at a very early age. Mary More, the eldest, was only twenty-one when she opened a boarding-school for young ladies at Bristol, from which Hannah benefited in many ways. In her seventeenth year (1762) she produced a pas-

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toral drama, *The Search after Happiness*, which was very successful, as it chimed in with the artificial taste then in vogue. No one could wire-draw sentences and spin high-sounding platitudes full of long words and far-fetched similes, better than Hannah More. She had read *Rasselas* to some effect, and, instead of studying from the every-day life about her, she drew the old old lessons about the vanity of human wishes, and served them up without any new sauce. But the public was not critical in those days, and popularity was easily earned.

When Hannah was twenty-two, she and her sister, Patty, paid a visit to Belmont, in the valley of the Avon. The wealthy squire of the place was guardian to two of their pupils, and he fell in love with the vivacious poetess. She accepted him, bought her trousseau, and gave up her interest in the school. The engagement, however, was broken off; but Mr. Turner persisted in settling an annuity on her, and left her a legacy of a £1000.

When she and her sister, Patty, went to London in 1772 or '73, they were invited to supper at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and saw Garrick in some of his favourite parts. Her admiration for his acting in *Hamlet* knew no bounds. In a stupendous sentence she writes, "whether in the simulation of madness, in the sinkings of despair, in the familiarity of friendship, in the whirlwind of passion, he never forgot he was a prince."

The theatre had a powerful attraction for her, but the Opera—

a[illegible] "The first I ever did, the last I ever shall go to," she writes dress,[illegible] sisters. "Yet I find," she continues, "that the same in life [illegible]re seen at the Opera every night, an amusement out of gui[illegible] a language the greater part of them do not under-

The influ[illegible]erformed by such a set of beings! Going to ten thousand i[illegible]getting drunk, is a sin which carries its own she rose from the [illegible] and that a very serious one. Thank my

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dear Doctor S. for his kind and seasonable admonition on my last Sunday's engagement at Mrs. Montagu's. Conscience had done its office before—nay, was busy at the time, and if it did not dash the cup of pleasure to the ground, infused at least a tincture of wormwood into it. I did think of the alarming call, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' and I thought of it to-night at the Opera."

No one ever accused worthy Hannah of having a spark of music in her soul, so the Opera could not possibly possess a single charm for her; but nothing is more easy than to

> "Compound for sins we are inclined to,
> By damning those we have no mind to."

Back again at Bristol, she wrote more industriously than before. Scribbling young ladies then threw off tragedies just as now they favour the public with novels. Instead of chapters, they wrote scenes; instead of three volumes, five acts and a prologue. To this period of Hannah More's life belongs the tragedy of *The Inflexible Captive*, which was afterwards followed by *Percy* and *The Fatal Falsehood;* the first is always considered her best, and was received with great applause, when it was put upon the stage some years afterwards.

London and its gaieties always proved a magnet to the demure black-eyed little Bristol schoolmistress. When her ballad *Sir Eldred of the Bower* appeared in 1776, she again came up to the Great Babylon to be petted and caressed. She was now thirty-one, and had developed into a full-blown authoress. Her sister Patty came with her, and wrote home as follows—"If Hannah's head stands proof against all the adulation and kindness of the great folks here, why, then, I will venture to say nothing of the kind will hurt her hereafter." She was intimate with the Garricks, she was a favoured guest at Mrs. Montagu's.

Can we call up a picture of the London of that day—of

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1776—when George III. was King; when hoops and powder, wigs and swords, were worn; when Ranelagh and Vauxhall were the fashion; when Sir Joshua Reynolds was the painter of the day; when wits and poets assembled at the coffee-houses; when the Literary Club held its meetings at the Turk's Head in Soho, with Dr. Samuel Johnson, attended by his faithful Bozzy, as its dictator and oracle? The Doctor, as we have seen, had taken "little Burney" under his special protection; he now extended his favour to Hannah More, and was never more good-humoured and gay than in her company. When some one happened to speak about poetry, "Hush! hush!" he cried, "it is dangerous to say a word about poetry before her; it is like talking of the art of war before Hannibal." Another time he lamented that she had not married Chatterton, so that "posterity might have seen a propagation of poets." Some match-makers began to think that the ponderous Doctor had an eye on the Bristol schoolmistress for himself, and her sister wrote—

"If a wedding should take place on our return between the mother of Eldred and the father of my much-loved Irene, don't be surprised. As Mrs. Montagu says, if tender words are the precursors of connubial engagements, we may expect great things, for it is nothing but 'child,' 'little fool,' 'love,' and 'dearest.' After much critical discourse, he turns round on me, and with one of his most amiable looks, which must be seen to form the least idea of it, he says, 'I have heard that you are engaged in the useful and honourable employment of teaching young ladies.' Upon which, with all the same ease, familiarity, and confidence we should have shown had only our own dear Dr. Stonehouse been present, we entered upon the history of our birth, parentage, and education, showing how we were born with more desires than guineas, and how, as years increased our appetites, the cupboard at home began to grow too small to gratify them;

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and how with a bottle of water, a bed, and a blanket, we set out to seek our fortunes; and how it was like to remain so, till, looking into our knowledge-boxes, we happened to find a little 'larning,' a good thing when land is gone; and so by giving a little of this little 'larning' to those who had less, we got a good store of gold in return; and how, at last, we wanted the wit to keep it. 'I love you both,' cried the Doctor; 'I love you all five. I was never at Bristol. I will come on purpose to see you. What! five women live happily together! I will come and see you. I have spent a happy evening. I am glad I came. God for ever bless you, you live lives to shame duchesses.' He took his leave with so much warmth and tenderness, that we were much affected at his manner."

Once Hannah More was in disgrace; the Doctor abused her for flattering him too much. But soon again she speaks of having "a headache for raking out so late with that gay libertine, Johnson." In the midst of the pomps and vanities of the wicked town, she took it into her head to study like a dragon. "I read four or five hours every day, and wrote ten hours yesterday." One evening she had a very pleasant comical dinner at Mrs. Cholmondeley's. "We were only nine females. Everything was very elegant, but we were as merry as if there had been no magnificence, and we all agreed that men were not so necessary as we had been foolish enough to fancy."

She visited Sir Joshua Reynolds' studio, to see his painting of the "Call of Samuel." "The gaze of young astonishment," she observes, "was never so beautifully expressed." Sir Joshua was quite glad to find that she knew something about the history of Samuel, for many fashionable ladies used to ask him who the prophet was. Sapient Hannah hopes that the time will come when people will not think it vulgar to be acquainted with Bible stories. She could always hold her own in conversation. When Lord Mon-

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boddo was giving vent to a contempt for the French, and said that "we moderns" were entirely degenerated, Hannah stepped bravely into the gap, and asked, "In what?" "In everything," was his answer: "men are not so tall as they were; women are not so handsome; nobody can now write a long period, everything dwindles." Hannah ventured to say that, though long periods were fine in oratory and declamation, yet that such was not the language of passion. He insisted that it was. "I," says Hannah, "defended my position by many passages from Shakespeare—among others, those broken bursts of passion in '*King John*'—

"'Gone to be married! Gone to swear a peace!
False blood to false blood joined! Gone to be friends!'

"And again—

"'My name is Constance—I am Geoffrey's wife.
Young Arthur is my son, and he is slain!'"

It is not everybody who would have had these quotations ready at hand, or would have had the boldness to hurl them at the head of a Scotch law lord.

With the Garricks, Hannah was thoroughly at home, and spent months with them at their country house at Hampton. Garrick's pet name for her was "Nine," as he said she united all the nine Muses. On Sunday evenings, when music was proposed, he turned to her and said, "Nine, you are a Sunday woman, retire to your room, I will call you when the music is over."

Though he had retired from the stage, he took the greatest interest in producing her play of *Percy*. It drew crowded houses, and Kitty Clive, the actress, observed that "Garrick's nursing had enabled the bantling to go alone in a month." The Crusades, poison, and suicide, give flavour to the piece, and Hannah More says that she had so much flattery that she might "choke herself in her own pap." Mrs. Barbauld tells her brother that she has been to see the play. "Miss

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HANNAH MORE.

BORN 1745; DIED SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1833.

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More," she says, "is very much the *ton*, and has made £600 or £700 by her play. I wish I could do the same." Garrick was preparing another of Hannah More's plays for the stage, *The Fatal Falsehood*, when he died suddenly on January 20, 1779, and she was recalled from Bristol to London to console his widow. She was present at the funeral in Westminster Abbey. Sheridan was chief mourner, with ten noblemen and gentlemen as pall-bearers. There was hardly a dry eye to be seen ; the "very players shed genuine tears." "Such an awful silence reigned," writes Hannah to her sisters, "that every word of the Burial Service was audible. How I felt it ! And this is all that is left of Garrick. So passes away the fashion of the world."

Garrick's death had a great effect on Hannah's naturally serious mind. She never went to the theatre again, not even when her own play, *The Fatal Falsehood*, was performed. Her thoughts were veering away from the stage. She made a compromise between her religious feelings and her dramatic tastes by composing a series of *Sacred Dramas*, which were even more eagerly welcomed than her former works. The idea of these dramas had been working in her mind ever since her talk with Sir Joshua Reynolds, when she told him he must get somebody to make an oratorio of Samuel. "I hope," she added, "that poets and painters will at last bring the Bible into fashion." She now applied herself to this task with zeal and industry.

It is easy for us to criticise her writings. Had she lived in the present day, she would probably have been a better writer ; for her faults of composition belonged to the age in which she lived, while her merits were all her own. Her personal influence, however, could hardly have been greater, perhaps not so great as it was.

The sharp distinction between the world and the Church —then the corner-stone of the Calvinistic party—pressed closely upon her. Notwithstanding these gloomy views, she had an immense capability for enjoyment. At one

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time, she mourns over "the strawberries which cost £150 at Lady Stormont's breakfast last Saturday," and yet she announces her departure for the Great Babylon with much zest and interest. "Mrs. Garrick and I," she says, "go to London before Wednesday—she to her mass, and I to my mantua-maker; she to be daubed with ashes, and I to be decorated with vanities. And now, we are upon vanities, what do you think is the reigning mode as to powder? Only turmerick, that coarse dye which stains yellow. The Goths and the Vandals, the Picts and Saxons, have come again. It falls out of the hair, and stains the skin, so that every pretty lady must look as yellow as a crocus, which I suppose will be a better compliment than as white as a lily."

"Did I tell you," she writes again, "that I breakfasted at Lord Barrington's? I am now in love with all the four brothers of that noble family. I think the peer as agreeable as any of them, always excepting the Bishop, whose conversation was, as it always is, instructive and delightful."

One of Hannah More's childish aspirations was to have a cottage too low for a clock. She was able to carry out her intention; she bought a low thatched house with a verandah, called Cowslip Green, in the parish of Wrington, to the south-east of Bristol. Here she spent her summers, and the other sisters, having retired from school-keeping, built a house for themselves in Bath, at Pulteny Street, which they made their winter home, the summers being passed with Hannah at Cowslip Green. Wilberforce, on one of his visits, was much struck with the ignorance of the people at Cheddar; he stirred up Hannah More to work amongst them, and she and her sister, Patty, set off in a chaise and put up at the George Inn. They started Sunday and day schools, engaged a mistress to teach spinning, and worked so zealously that very soon an amazing improvement was seen amongst the little heathen of the cliffs and downs about Cheddar. Nor did Mrs. Hannah (for she and her sisters dropped the young ladyish "Miss") stop here. At one time,

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she tried to rescue a girl of fourteen who had eloped; at another, her energies were directed towards helping an ungrateful milk-woman; and, again, she befriended a "fine young creature who had thrown herself into the canal at St. James's Park, in a masquerade dress." She was often rewarded by ingratitude, but when education was concerned, her zeal never failed. "Many a child is brought to me in my room," she writes, "for a little reward of a tract, etc. Since I began this scrawl, a sharp little girl was brought for this purpose. She repeated a short poem extremely well. I then said, 'Now, I must examine what you know of the Bible. Who was Abraham?' After some hesitation, she answered, 'I think he was an Exeter man.'" This was almost as bad as the fashionable ladies who were so much in the dark about Samuel!

Hannah More was also very zealous about the abolition of of the slave-trade, and her sympathies brought her into the closest intimacy with Wilberforce, Thornton, and all the Clapham set. An active young Abolitionist, Zachary Macaulay (Lord Macaulay's father) was sent down to Cowslip Green expressly to be introduced to her. Here he met Selina Mills, a former pupil at Miss More's school, and a life-long friend of the sisters. Mr. Macaulay fell in love with pretty, attractive Miss Mills, and she was nothing loth to give him her heart in return. Mrs. Patty, in the true spirit of romantic friendship, wanted to make Selina promise that she would never marry, but always remain a youngest sister of the household at Cowslip Green. Mrs. Hannah, however, was more unselfish, and favoured the embryo love affair, which finally resulted in a marriage in 1799.

Meantime, Mrs. Hannah's pen was not idle. Her more serious way of thinking was shown by a book which she published in 1788, *Thoughts on the Manners of the Great.* Three years after, came *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World.* These books are all cumbrous with words and stiff with long sentences, as a

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reviewer observed, "when Mrs. More lights her candle, she hides it, not under one bushel only, but under half a dozen."

But everything she wrote, no matter what it was, was greeted with flattery and applause. Her *Strictures on the Modern System of Education*, published in 1799, attracted so much attention, that Porteous, then Bishop of London, wished to entrust the education of the Princess Charlotte of Wales to her care. This scheme fell to the ground, but Hannah More had the honour of forming the mind of one far more distinguished than any Princess. This was Lord Macaulay himself, precocious "little Tom" as he then was. In 1802, the Miss Mores left Cowslip Green, for a comfortable roomy house which they had built for themselves at Barley Wood, in the same parish of Wrington. Mrs. Macaulay was very glad to send her boy to a house where he was encouraged without being spoiled. The kind old ladies, stately and sedate, in their soft lavender or grey silk dresses, and their close white caps, made a companion of the little boy. Macaulay himself tells us that Hannah More's notice first called out his literary tastes, and her presents laid the foundation of his library. She superintended his studies, his pleasures, and his health. She would keep him by her listening to him as he read prose by the ell, declaimed poetry by the hour, and discussed and compared his favourite heroes, ancient, modern, and fictitious. Sometimes she coaxed him into the garden, under pretence of a lecture on botany. Sometimes she sent him to run round the grounds, or play at cooking in the kitchen. Sometimes she gave him Bible lessons, which always ended in a theological argument. Every nook of Barley Wood was dear to him—the shrubs, the cottage, the esplanade of turf before the door, the old engravings on the dining and drawing-room walls; the book-case, with four volumes of *Don Quixote* and the *Lyrical Ballads* in one corner; the roses running up the trellis-work outside; the Temple of the Winds a little further on; and the root-house, with

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its busts of Locke and of Porteous—all these were vivid and distinct after fifty years. Then, too, there was the fine old church at Wrington, where little Tom sat on Sunday afternoons, staring at the great black-letter volume of the *Book of Martyrs*, which was chained to the neighbouring reading-desk, while Mrs. Hannah sat sedately opposite, and afterwards pronounced the vicar to be "a poor preacher, and not at all a Gospel minister."

We sometimes wonder how familiar Macaulay is with the little details of the literary life led by a past generation; and this is not surprising when we think that he first heard of them from an eye-witness—from Hannah More herself. She could tell him about the rolling gait and odd gestures of Dr. Johnson; about Garrick's extraordinary variety of expression, and the unequalled radiance and penetration of his eyes. She could tell him of all her journeys up to town in the jolting Bristol coach. She was a link between two generations. He might well say she was his second mother. She took great interest in one of his first poems on *Olaus Magnus, King of Norway*, and wrote to his mother, "Tell Tom I desire to know how Olaus gets on." When he was six years old, she wrote, "Though you are a little boy now, you will one day, if it please God, be a man; but long before you are a man, I hope you will be a scholar. I therefore wish you to purchase such books as will be useful and agreeable to you then, and that you apply this very small sum in laying out a little tiny corner-stone for your future library."

Another time she thanks him for his two letters, "so neat and free from blots." He was now entitled to another book, and she recommends Johnson's *Hebrides* or Walton's *Lives*. Long afterwards, Macaulay refused to review the works of his kind old friend; for he said he could not possibly do anything but praise her. She was to him "what Ninon was to Voltaire, begging her pardon for comparing her to a bad woman."

We catch another glimpse of Hannah More in Lady

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Chatterton's Life. "Hannah More," she says, "was a frequent visitor at Barham Court, and I can just remember the peculiarly penetrating expression of her black eyes. I was not afraid of her, and yet the piercing look of those eyes haunted me; and sometimes, when I felt naughty, I fancied that they looked with disapproval on me. I can, therefore, quite understand the great influence she erected in her day —an influence for good, I think, as far as it came direct from herself. She certainly set a considerable number of Protestants thinking about religion for the first time in their lives; and she left London, where she had many friends and congenial society, to bury herself in a remote part of Somersetshire, doing works of mercy according to her lights, with much self-denial and labour."

Hannah More's personal influence reminds us of that exerted by Harriet Martineau—a woman who, in many respects, was widely different. And yet these two have a certain amount of resemblance to one another. Both had strong wills, great industry and application; both were free from romance, and had an earnest desire for freedom and independence; both were flattered to the top of their bent; both were a power in the world, and both were able to lead a happy, contented, useful, single life, in a quiet country retreat. Many gulfs, of course, yawn between them. Harriet Martineau believed in nothing and nobody but herself and Mr. Atkinson; while Hannah More was full of faith, and was the oracle of the extreme Evangelical party.

Her novel, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*, has a great deal of shrewdness and caustic wit about it. It was *the* book of its year, and was quoted everywhere. Notwithstanding many expenses and disadvantages, she cleared £2,000 by it in a single year. This sum was paid in instalments of £500 a quarter, and the copyright remained in her own hands. Her next works were *Practical Piety* (1811), *Christian Morals* (1812); and in 1815 she brought out *Essays on the Character of St. Paul*, which was the first

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of its kind, and has been the pioneer of legions of similar books. But foremost in truth and simplicity are her *Village Politicians*, and the series of Cheap Repository Tracts. In one year two million of the tracts were sold. *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* is the best known. It is a portrait from life. The shepherd has eight children and six shillings a week. He lives in a hovel with only one room. Little Molly gathers the wool left by the sheep, the biggest girl spins it, and the children knit it into stockings. The father mends the shoes. Their Sunday dinner is potatoes and salt, and yet they are thankful, pious, and contented.

During Hannah More's later years, Mrs. Barbauld paid. Barley Wood a visit. "Nothing," she says, "could be more friendly than my reception, and nothing more charming than their situation. An extensive view over the Mendip Hills is in front of their house, with the pretty view of Wrington. Their house or cottage (because it is thatched) stands on rising ground, which they have planted, and made a little paradise. The five sisters, all good old maids, have lived together these fifty years. Hannah More is a good deal broken by illness, but possesses fully her power of conversation, and her vivacity. I was given to understand she is writing something."

The sisters died one by one. Patty was the last to go, and Hannah was then left quite alone. Her servants wasted and squandered her substance, so that the kind old lady was obliged to leave her beloved Barley Wood in 1828, when she was eighty-three. As she gazed on her trees and garden, she said, "I am like Eve, driven from Paradise, but not like Eve, by angels." A house was taken for her at Windsor Terrace, Clifton, and here she died on the 7th of September, 1833, aged eighty-eight. When death was coming, her face brightened, she stretched out her arms, and cried, "Patty! joy!" Macaulay paid a visit to Wrington in 1856, and saw his dear old friend's grave, with what he calls a "foolish, canting inscription on it."

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VI.

LADY ANNE BARNARD.

1750–1825.

Scotch songstresses—The Lindsays—Life at Balcarres Castle—Lady Margaret's marriage—*Auld Robin Gray*—The sequel—Marriage with Mr. Barnard—Adventures in South Africa—Widowhood—*Chronicles of the Lindsay Family*—A serene and buoyant old age.

IF we ask for a good national song or ballad written by an Englishwoman, we are obliged to answer, "There is not one." Poems which require a good deal of culture properly to appreciate, there are, no doubt, but not one song which has made its way into the heart of the people, which is at once true and simple, which might be sung by a country girl milking her cow, as well as by a duchess in her drawing-room. If we turn to France, we find that the national song of the Empire, *Partant pour la Syrie*, was written, and the air composed by a woman, Queen Hortense; still, "one swallow does not make a summer." England is drawn blank; and if we turn to Ireland, we do not fare much better. We certainly have Lady Morgan's *Kate Kearney*, which is very piquante and droll; we have also Lady Dufferin's *Irish Emigrant*, and her *Now, Terence, are ye going to lave me?* both of which have some claim to be considered national ballads, but there the list ends. When we turn to Scotland, the case is altered, we find that women-singers abound; songs are their speciality,

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their peculiar province, which they have made their own.

First and foremost is Lady Nairn, who may be called the Queen of Scotch songstresses, her songs have identified themselves with the people, they have become one with them, speaking out their language in simple heartfelt words. But beside Lady Nairn's songs, may be fitly placed poor lonely Jean Adam's *There is nae luck about the house*, Lady Grizzle Baillie's *If my heart were na licht, I wad dee*, and Mrs. Cockburn's and Jean Elliot's versions of *The Flowers o' the Forest.* Susanna Blamire, the Cumberland songstress, has given us *And ye shall walk in silk attire ;* Joanna Baillie, *Wooed and married and a'*, while last, but not least, we have Lady Anne Barnard's *Auld Robin Gray.* Truly matchless it is, "a real pastoral," as Sir Walter Scott calls it, "worth all the dialogues Corydon and Phillis have had together from the days of Theocritus downwards." First of of all, the authoress tells us, "a very fine tune was put to it by a doctor of music, then it was sung by youth and beauty for five years ; it had a romance composed from it by a man of eminence : it was the subject of a play, of an opera, of a pantomime ; it was sung by the united armies of America, acted by Punch, and afterwards danced by *dogs in the street !* " If this is not fame, it is hard to say what is ; but the fame came to one who troubled her head very little about it. Let us see what sort of a life she led.

James Lindsay, Earl of Balcarres, grey, gaunt, and gouty, close on sixty years of age, fell in love. Did he fall in love with some staid spinster of his own time of life ? Not at all. His fancy rested on a plump, little lass, Miss Dalrymple, who had just entered on her twenty-third year. The Earl had met some disappointment in his youth ; he had been out in the '15, with the old Pretender, and had been shorn of some of his estates ; he now seemed fated to meet with a new disappointment. Miss Dalrymple, like Mistress Jean, "the penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree," in the *Laird o' Cockpen*,

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would not have the weather-beaten Earl. He did the best thing that could be done under the circumstances—he fell ill, took to his bed, and made his will, leaving the unkind fair one half his fortune. This was too much. Miss Dalrymple's heart softened; instead of saying "No!" she now said "Yes!" became Countess of Balcarres, and reigned at the family castle on the Fife coast, which looks out on the Bass Rock.

By degrees, eleven children, eight sons and three daughters, grew up round the Earl and his young wife; Anne was the eldest of all, and was born in 1750. The flock was a very unruly one; the young "pickles" deserted the nursery and schoolroom, invaded the housekeeper's room, and ran riot in the garden. Lady Balcarres was no meek, long-suffering angel, she struck out briskly with her own little white hand, as her daughter Anne testifies. She whipped the culprits, shut them up in dark closets, imposed fasts and doses of rhubarb, and, in short, kept a tight hand over her subjects, who sometimes returned her as good as she gave. "Woman," said her son John one day, "I told you I would do the same thing, and I'll do the same to-morrow." He accordingly did so, was whipped, and another plaything taken from him. When the sun shone warm, he said, "Ah! this is a fine day, my mother cannot take *it* from me." The old Earl used to exclaim, "Oddsfish, Madam, you will break the spirits of my young troops, I will not have it so."

Though rough the Earl was kindly and polite to women. Once, when he caught an old dame stealing his turnips, he scolded long and loud, but she knew her man, "Eh, my lord," she exclaimed, "they're unco heavy, will ye no gie me a lift?" which accordingly he did, and hoisted the bundle of stolen goods on the delinquent's back. The Balcarres children took their mother's severity differently. Bright faced joyous Lady Anne cheerfully put up with bread and water, and asked the butler to give her a piece of oat

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cake for variety; while blue-eyed golden-haired Lady Margaret hung her head, and lamented that nobody loved her.

We are told, though it seems hard to believe, that the sisters, in tucked up yellow and silver silk frocks, with gauze flounces (made out of the countess's wedding trousseau), used to wade in the burn, pay visits to the farmyards, and sit on the backs of cows, eating turnips, and scattering grain to the cocks and hens that gathered around. On Sundays, they repeated verses from a psalm, and attended at the parish kirk; then came a Sunday dinner at the paternal table, ending with a treat of sweetmeats.

Their governess, Miss Henrietta Cumming, the "least little woman that ever was seen for nothing," had been picked up by Lady Balcarres at an Edinburgh lodging house, the little "body" sang sweetly, wrote elegant letters, painted silk and satin dresses in patterns of flowers and birds, and was an expert at mantua making, millinery, and ruffles. She bedizened all her friends, did up their cloaks and dresses, and once was bold enough to think of painting a gown for no less a personage than Queen Charlotte. She got the size of her Majesty's hoop, and was in treaty for twenty yards of satin, which was to cost £10. Whether Queen Charlotte ever figured in the garment we are not told, but as Miss Henny Cumming succeeded in getting a Government pension, we may suppose she did. The shrewd little lady boasted of blue blood, and proved her descent from the Red Comyn quite to her own satisfaction, and was prime favourite and correspondent of old Mrs. Cockburn, then at the head of the Edinburgh Literary Society. "Sylph," so Miss Cumming was nicknamed, had been intended by the Countess, at first, merely to instruct the Balcarres young ladies in fancy needle work, and to be a sort of upper servant. But quick-witted, sharp-tongued Sylph was more than a match for her ladyship; she wept, she starved herself, and was finally allowed to dine with the family. She

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was too proud to take a salary, but she established herself firmly at Balcarres Castle, and played her cards so well that the Earl, notwithstanding his poverty and his eleven children, left her a legacy at his death.

She was cordially detested by her plain-spoken little pupils, and a standing feud was kept up between her and "Soph" Johnstone, another inmate of the curiously-constituted Balcarres household. "Soph" was a daughter of the Laird of Hilton. She came to the Castle on a visit, and remained for thirteen years, "taking up each child till it was out of long clothes." She was a first-rate oddity. She wore a man's great-coat, hat, and square-buckled shoes. She walked with long strides, and swore occasionally. Once Annie Scott happened to stumble against her, and received a rough kick and a rude exclamation, "What are ye wab-wabstering there for?" One of "Soph's" vagaries was shoeing horses, which she did as well as a smith. She had a private forge set up in her room at the Castle, and besides this elegant accomplishment, she played on the fiddle and sang a man's songs in a man's bass voice. Between her and the suave Henny Cumming there was war to the knife; and kind-hearted Lady Anne often tried to make peace with the two, but sometimes her sense of drollery got the better of her, and she and Lady Margaret played a practical joke on their rough friend. They once wrote a letter as if from a rich cousin, begging "Soph" to go on a long visit. "Soph" was completely taken in, she wrote and accepted the invitation, gave out her clothes to be done up, ordered a new wig, and told the girls of her approaching departure from the Castle. They were aghast at the success of their joke, confessed on the spot, and were forgiven by kind-hearted "Soph."

Old Lady Dalrymple was also an inmate of Balcarres—soft and sleepy in her way. In fact, every variety of character was represented at the great house, and as many as fifty souls could turn out in the event of a ball. The two

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elder girls early gave themselves leave "to drive through the sea of books without pilot or rudder." Lady Anne helped her father to compile the family chronicle of the Lindsays, and one of her earliest recollections was watching "the Laird of Macfarlane, the ugliest chieftain with the reddest nose she had ever seen, hand in a bundle of papers, wrapped in a plaid." The Earl exhorted his "Annie" and his "dear Peg" to be good and mild; he told them that men loved such companions as could help to make them gay and easy; he insisted on the advantages of music-books and religion, so that they might be happy, even though they should be old maids.

When Lady Anne was seventeen her father died. For the first years of budding womanhood, she and her sister saw a little of the great world of Edinburgh—of balls and theatres. To reach that delectable land they had to drive twenty miles in the old family coach to Kinghorn Ferry, then to hire a boat and be rowed across to the opposite side. Lady Margaret, whom her sister calls "the most beautiful woman in Europe," and who was certainly a beauty of the blonde, blue-eyed type, met her fate at Edinburgh, in the person of Mr. Fordyce, of Roehampton.

When Lady Anne found herself back at the old castle, without her usual companion, she felt lonely, and began to scribble. Among "Soph" Johnstone's songs was a somewhat coarse one, which she sang to an old Scotch air. Lady Anne thought she could improve on the words, and write a simple story of village life. Robin Gray was the name of a well-known shepherd at Balcarres, who had once stopped the truant children in one of their escapades. Lady Anne put the old man's name at the head of her ballad, and began the first verse which is generally left out in singing—

"When the sheep are in the fauld, when the kye's a' at hame,
And a' the weary warld to rest are gane,
The woes o' my heart fa' in showers frae my e'e,
Unkent by my gudeman wha sleeps sound by me."

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As the ballad proceeded, little Elizabeth, twelve or thirteen years younger than sister Anne, came into the room. "I have been writing a ballad, my dear," said Lady Anne, "and I am oppressing my heroine with many misfortunes. I have already sent her Jamie to sea, broken her father's arm, made her mother fall sick, and given her auld Robin for a lover. I wish to load her with a fifth sorrow in the last line; help me to one, I pray."

"Steal the cow, sister Anne," said the little Elizabeth.

The advice was followed, the cow was stolen, and the ballad finished. Though it was what the French call an "inspiration," still inspirations are often the better for a hint from an outsider. Lady Anne used to sing her own ballad so well, that once, at Dalkeith, Lady Jane Scott told her that she sang it as if she had written it, and that unless she gave her a copy the secret would be revealed. Lady Anne, however, remained resolutely silent. If she had the dreaded aroma of authorship about her, would not all her friends shirk her as if she had the plague? So it seemed to her eighteenth-century ideas. Her song, meanwhile, made its way, as all true songs will, in time. The title of it was given to new fashions; the "Werther" hat was succeeded by the "Robin Gray" hat. It was translated into French; and the learned Society of Antiquaries were quite resolved to investigate the age and source of the mysterious ballad—even going so far as to offer a reward of £20 to anybody who would throw light on the subject. But all of no avail.

As time went on, the other members of the Balcarres family got out or got off in the world. William, the young midshipman, was drowned near Saint Helena; James died of his wounds in a French prison; and beautiful Lady Margaret was left a childless widow, her husband, ruined and disgraced, having sunk into an untimely grave. Lady Anne went to London, and found her sister at Berkeley Square. From that time the two lived together. The Countess preferred Edinburgh, where she was a Triton

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amongst the minnows, rather than London, where she was a minnow amongst the Tritons. Her youngest daughter, too, Lady Elizabeth having made a grand matrimonial *coup*, and become Countess of Hardwicke, there could be no anxiety about her prospects.

Lady Anne Lindsay and Lady Margaret Fordyce found plenty of congenial society in London. They gave and went to numberless parties, and Lady Anne made herself so agreeable, that the Prince Regent sent for her when he was ill to cheer him up, and gave her a gold chain as a mark of his esteem. If he had done nothing worse than this, Thackeray could not have satirized him so successfully. The two sisters paid a six weeks' visit to Scotland in 1790, and Lady Balcarres, whose youthful asperities seemed to have been toned down by years, said to her daughter, "Annie, I wish you would tell me how that unlucky business of Jamie and Jeanie ended." So Lady Anne, who had often been annoyed by hearing a continuation of "Auld Robin Gray" sung in the streets, now vindicated her right to her ballad. She went to her room and wrote the second part of her celebrated song. She gave no copy of it, but Lady Balcarres picked up the words from her daughter's singing, and could repeat them by heart, quite proud and pleased that she was the only one besides Lady Anne who could do so. Sequels are often a mistake, and so, perhaps, is this, though it contains many lines of exquisite pathos and delicate feeling, which we should be reluctant to lose. There is something very touching in the commencement. Jamie has gone, and Jeanie is left alone with her secret sorrow.

"The winter was come, 'twas summer nae mair,
And trembling the leaves were fleein' thro' the air.
'Oh, winter,' says Jeanie, 'we kindly agree,
For the sun he looks wae, when he shines upon me.'
Nae langer she mourned, her tears were a' spent,
Despair it was come, and she thought it content;
She thought it content, but her cheek it grew pale,
And she bent like a lily broke down by the gale.

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"Her father and mother observed her decay.
'What ails ye, my bairn?' they ofttimes would say.
'Ye turn round your wheel, but you come little speed,
For feeble's your hand, and silly's your thread.'
She smiled when she heard them, to banish their fear,
But wae looks the smile that is seen through a tear."

As for Auld Robin himself, he becomes pensive and silent, his face grows "lean like the side of a brae where the torrent has been." He falls ill, he takes to his bed, he tells Jeanie "to greet nae mair." He confesses—

"'Twas I stole the cow.

"'I cared not for Crummie, I thought but o' thee,
I thought it was Crummie stood 'twixt you and me.
While she fed your parents, oh, did you not say
You never would marry wi' Auld Robin Gray?'

* * * *

But truth, soon or late, comes to open daylight,
For Jamie came back, and your cheek it grew white,
White, white grew your cheek, but aye true to me;
Ay, Jeanie, I'm thankfu', I'm thankfu' to dee.'"

Then the old man calls the lovers to his bedside; he tells Jamie to be "kind to my Jeanie, and soon may it be,"

"Waste nae time, my dauties, in mourning for me."

So Jeanie, after Auld Robin's death, becomes a happy wife to her Jamie,

"Wi' a bonnie wee bairn, th' auld folks by the fire,
Oh, now she has a' that her heart can desire."

Yet, though Jamie *is* left happy, we feel that the peculiar charm of the first part is wanting; the pathos is now diverted from Jeanie to Auld Robin. When he dies penitent, we cannot help forgiving him, and being sorry for the poor old man, who has loved not wisely but too well, and who is fated to witness happiness through other people's eyes.

It was during this visit to Edinburgh, in 1790, that Mrs. Cockburn notes that she had a visit from the Dowager

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Lady Balcarres, and her two fair daughters, Lady Anne and Lady Margaret, "who, I assure you," adds the old dame, "are so far from being the worse of the wearing that they are handsomer than ever. Lady Anne is grown not jolly, but plump, which has greatly improved her looks." The two sisters returned to their home at Berkeley Square, and soon afterwards Lady Anne, who had reached the comfortable age of over forty years, married Mr. Andrew Barnard, son of the Bishop of Limerick. He was handsome, pleasant, and somewhat younger than she was. As for her, "age could not wither, nor custom stale, her infinite variety," she could never be really old, for her light heart and cheerful spirits kept her young.

In 1797 she accompanied her husband to the Cape of Good Hope. He went as private secretary to Lord Macartney, and as the Governor was unmarried, Lady Anne had to do the honours of the colony. She kept a journal during her stay, which is very piquant and amusing. Her powers of description are so great that, if she had lived in the present day, publishers would have been squabbling for the honour of bringing out her experiences. She thoroughly enjoyed the Cape. She gave balls the first day of every month, and had tea and music every Thursday, and insisted that her rooms should be well lit with wax candles. Sometimes, when there was a grand dinner, she looked into the kitchen, to superintend the labours of her Swiss cook.

For a change, she and her husband went to a Dutch farm-house, which they called Paradise, and here she amused herself feeding cats and chickens, sketching and gardening. Her pets were legion—secretary birds, with long legs and large wings, a sea-calf, a penguin, two jackals, two young wild cats, a horned owl, and a beautiful green chameleon. She was perpetually collecting curiosities to send home—a tiger-skin for the Prince Regent, and castor-oil seeds for the Queen and Princesses, were amongst her treasures.

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One of her adventures was scaling Table Mountain, and sleeping on the top of it. Before starting, she says, "I had stolen a part of Barnard's wardrobe, for precaution, which made him, as I bounded up the rocks, laugh and call out, 'Hey day! Anne, what are these?' 'Yours, meyne lieve vreunde,' said I; 'you must acknowledge it is the first time you were ever conscious of my wearing them.' The slave guide smiled, and called her 'a braave vrow—a brave wife!' and all the gentlemen envied this 'braave vrow,' as she tripped up the mountain with light heels and a lighter heart. When she reached the top, she said to her learned friend, Mr. Barrow, 'Now, then, thou man of infinite charts and maps, explain to me all I see before me, and what I do not see. What is this? What is that? What are the different bays I hear you all wrangling about? Do not suppose that I am to clamber up to the top of Table Mountain for nothing.'" The party drank toasts in Madeira wine, joined in the chorus of "God save the King," and after a supper of snipe ("I believe we ate a dozen apiece"), they encamped for the night. The slaves lay around the fire, while "Barnard and I found within the tent a good bed, on which two heads reposed that were truly grateful for all the blessings conferred on them, but most of all for their happiness in each other."

One charming trait in Lady Anne's character is shown by the following incident. Lord Mornington, the new Governor-General, and his *suite*, stopped at the Cape on their way to India. Lady Anne wrote to say, "that she would have been happy to accommodate people that they loved so much, had not the prior claim of the A——'s as older friends, nearer friends, and *poorer friends*, made it impossible to sacrifice the holy motive to the agreeable attraction." But bugs invaded the Governor-General's quarters, and he was glad to take refuge in the Barnards' back parlour.

A party of four—Lady Anne, her husband, the beauty of

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the colony, and a cousin, Johnny Dalrymple, aged seventeen—made a tour of the country in a bullock-waggon. Lady Anne took a stock of pine-apple cheeses, a jar of Batavian ginger, tea, coffee, sugar, rice, together with coarse handkerchiefs, ribbons, beads, knives, needles and thread—these latter presents for the natives. The party were all dressed alike in great-coats. The gentlemen shot bocks, pheasants, and wild peacocks ; Lady Anne sketched mountains and Hottentots, and added serpent skins and calabashes to her curiosities. Sometimes they dined off the top of a cask, and lay down to sleep like a company of strolling players ; sometimes they passed their night at Dutch farm-houses. The booresses were so filled with pity and amazement at Lady Anne's childless state, that she got her husband to consent to the imaginary existence of four boys, left behind in England for their education ! The poor beauty was terribly shocked when a Dutch vrow offered her a child's soiled night-cap to wipe out a cup, but gay spirited Lady Anne only laughed. At one house—the Van Rheims'—a great friendship was made. Lady Anne tied up the children's waists and heads with scarlet and white ribbons, and left the vrow her gold-topped smelling-bottle as a mark of regard.

In 1802 she returned to England, her husband remaining behind for a year to settle colonial affairs. She went to see her mother, who now lived at Balcarres, which had been given up by Earl Alexander, and redeemed by his brother Robert. Lady Anne was glad to see the " dear old nest again, where eleven brother and sister chickens had been hatched and fostered, who through life had never known what it was to peck at each other."

In 1808 Mr. Barnard died, after a happy married life of over fourteen years. Still, Lady Anne, with her cheerful temperament, found life worth living. She and her sister paid occasional visits to Balcarres, and the Countess was handed down to dinner every day by her youngest grand-

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son, aged five. There were seventy-seven years between the two, and the dowager did not "feel quite happy unless she had a few compliments paid to her on her dress and looks." Christmas Day was her birthday, and a grand festival at the Castle. When the old lady reached her eighty-second year, Lady Anne brought her a black lace cloak, put it over the nice little figure, and wished her many happy returns of the day.

In 1810 Lady Anne took a house at Wimbledon, but changed her quarters again for Berkeley Square. Lady Margaret, the quondam beauty, in the autumn of her days married a former lover, Sir James Burgess, and died two years after her marriage. Lady Anne did not entirely withdraw from society after her sister's death. She gave cosy little dinners, and loved to welcome her numerous nephews, amongst them Lord Lindsay and James Lindsay, a young Guardsman. One of them says that Lady Anne "could change a disagreeable party into an agreeable one; she could make the dullest speak, the shiest feel happy, and the witty flash fire." She was entertaining a large party of distinguished guests at dinner, when a little hitch occurred in the kitchen. The old servant came up behind her and whispered, "My lady, you must tell another story, the second course won't be ready for five minutes."

The old Countess lived to the patriarchal age of ninety-two, and Lady Anne survived her mother five years. She amused her later years by compiling *Chronicles of the Lindsay Family*, and set to work, *con amore*, studying old papers, collecting anecdotes, and copying her own journals of bygone days. "When alone," she wrote, "I am not above five-and-twenty, I can entertain myself with a succession of inventions which would be more effective if they were fewer. I forget that I am sixty-eight, and if by chance I see myself in the glass looking very abominable, I do not care. What is the moral of this? That as far as my experience goes (and it is said that we must be all physicians

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or fools at forty) occupation is the best nostrum in the great laboratory of human life for pains, cares, mortifications, and ennui." Words which deserve to be written in letters of gold.

One of the last pleasant experiences of Lady Anne's life was reading a verse from the second part of "Auld Robin Gray," in the *Pirate*, with her name attached, Sir Walter Scott having picked up the conclusion of the ballad from his aunt, Miss Christy Rutherford. Lady Anne now transmitted to the author of *Waverley* the origin, birth, life, death, confession, will, and testament of her song, assuring him that he was the first person out of her own family to whom it had been told. She sent him copies of the second part of the ballad, and with her consent it was printed and circulated among the members of the Bannatyne Club.

Serene and buoyant, as she had lived, Lady Anne Barnard died in 1825. More celebrated women there have been, but not one who has left behind her a more fragrant memory of "sweetness and light," of sprightly humour, and unselfish cheerfulness.

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VII.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

1762–1851.

Twin daughters at Bothwell Manse—"Miss Jack"—At Glasgow—Windmill Street—*Plays on the Passions*—*Basil*—*De Montfort*—Opinion of Sir Walter Scott—Life at Hampstead—*The Family Legend*—Scotch love songs.

AS a rule, Scotchwomen are orderly, prim, and precise; this character was even more applicable to the Scotchwomen of the last century than to those of the present day. The Mrs. Grizzles and Mrs. Bettys, who are so admirably hit off in Miss Ferrier's clever novels, are provincial to the core, descendants of the Covenanters, great-granddaughters of the "gude housewives" of John Knox's congregations, amusingly narrow-minded, shocked at the vanities of fashionable life, and regarding play-acting and play-actors as agents of Beelzebub; simplicity in everything—in worship—in dress—in manners—was upheld; an organ was the "deevil's kist of whistles," and woe betide the lass who, like Jean Glover, ran away with a strolling player laddie. It often happens that a general rule holds good for a long time, and then breaks down completely like ice which has been skated on for many days, but which all of a sudden collapses, softens, and shows that too much freedom cannot be taken with it. The Scotch are not a dramatic people,

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neither are Scotchwomen often bitten with a mania for the stage, yet the only woman who has ever written a creditable tragedy was a Scotch minister's daughter. "Women," says Byron in his Diary, "*except Joanna Baillie*, cannot write tragedy ; they have not seen enough or felt enough of life for it." The exception was a remarkable one, made in favour of a simple-minded old maid who had been brought up in a Presbyterian atmosphere, and who, after a lengthened though monotonous residence in England, appeared at Auld Reekie speaking with a broader accent than ever, and who was as thoroughly Scotch in language, manners, and feeling as Jeanie Deans herself.

In the autumn of 1762, at the manse of Bothwell, in Lanarkshire, twin daughters were prematurely born. The minister, Dr. James Baillie, and his wife looked wistfully at the two delicate little bairns which had been given to them. One frail blossom died at her birth ; the other survived and was called Joanna, after her maternal uncle, Dr. John Hunter, the celebrated anatomist. This semi-masculine name suited the semi-masculine nature of the future woman. She had little of the tender clinging of her sex, little of that fond yearning after affection which seems to belong to it, but she was modest, true, affectionate, dignified. Ambition she may have had, courage she certainly had, perseverance, which ultimately settled down into a stubborn resolve to "gang her ain gait, in her ain way," and along with this was an heroic patience and cheerfulness which no delays could dishearten, and no difficulties could daunt. After a long life of nearly ninety years, she was calmly content to see others preferred before her, and to see herself—the genius that Scott delighted to honour—"so long remembered that she was forgot." Joanna Baillie had real grit in her ; true iron that could not be broken, and would not be bent. In her father's manse, where "Clyde's banks look bonnie," she spent her childhood. Miss Tytler tells us in her *Songstresses of Scotland* that "the fruit lands of Lanark-

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shire are in May and June one great pink and white flush of orchard-blossoms. In August and September boughs bend richly under the weight of purple plums, scarlet-streaked apples, and mottled, olive, and russet pears. Close by are the fragments of the great castle-keep of the Douglasses. At a mile's distance from Bothwell village is Bothwell Bridge, where Monmouth, Dalzel, and Claverhouse broke and scattered the Covenanters, who, driven to desperation by the murder of Archbishop Sharpe, had gained a partial victory at Drumclog. Legends of Michael Scott, of grey bogies and sheeted ghosts haunting the cairns of murdered men and women, abounded along the dark shores of Blantyre, and little Joanna doubtless picked up many a weird tale in her father's kitchen. She and her elder sister Agnes probably made themselves busy distributing "cheese and bannocks, brose and kail," to the sturdy Edie Ochiltrees who dropped in for a chat and a meal by the minister's "ingle-stane." The Baillie children ran about with their father's humble parishioners, barefooted like them. In after life Joanna often confessed a longing to race about in the grass, free from the encumbrance of shoes and stockings. She astonished her staid Hampstead friends not a little by urging them to let their children run about with unfettered feet as she had once done. She calls herself and Agnes "two tiny imps, who

> "Paddled barefoot side by side
> Among the sunny shallows of the Clyde,'

while the "minnows and spotted par swimming in mazy rings the pools within

> "A thrill of gladness through our bosoms sent,
> Seen in the power of early wonderment."

The elder Baillies were calm, undemonstrative folk. Repression of all emotions, even the gentlest and most honourable to human nature, was the lesson of this Presby-

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JOANNA BAILLIE.

BORN 1762; DIED FEBRUARY 23RD, 1851.

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terian household. Agnes Baillie told Lucy Aikin that when she had been bitten by a dog which was thought to be mad, her father had sucked the wound at the hazard, it was supposed, of his own life, but he had never given her a kiss! "Joanna," says Miss Aikin, "spoke to me of her yearning to be caressed when a child. She would sometimes venture to clasp her little arms about her mother's knees; her mother would seem to chide her, 'but,' added Joanna, 'I know she liked it.'" Joanna's father was a Scotch edition of that pastor in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* that we all know so well. She describes him as

> "A generous useful man;
> The toilsome way, the winter's beating storm,
> Ne'er kept him from the peasant's distant cot
> Where want and suffering were the inmate's lot,
> Who looked for comfort in his friendly face,
> As by the sick-bed's side he took his place;
> A peace-maker in each divided home,
> To him all strife-perplexèd folk would come."

Joanna was not much more than six years old when her father exchanged the kirk of Bothwell for that of Hamilton, also in the fruit country. Hamilton, in comparison with Bothwell, was a scene of busy and boisterous life; it was a town of six thousand inhabitants clustering round the park and palace of the Duke of Hamilton. Here Joanna found a number of young people of her own standing. She was something of a tomboy; swinging, skipping, and climbing were her great accomplishments. She ran along the parapets of buildings and on the tops of walls, and scampered heedlessly on any pony that came in her way. Once, when she was riding double with her elder brother Matthew, he was thrown off and had to suffer the misfortune of a broken arm. "Look at Miss Jack," said an admiring farmer, "*she* sits her horse as if it was a bit of herself." Out-of-door exercises were her delight. "I rambled over the heaths and plashed in the brooks most of the day," she confesses. Even in her womanhood she was never a book-

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lover, never bookish, as her friend Lucy Aikin was. She gleaned her inspiration from the sights of Nature, from old legends, and from the real life that was passing around her. "I could not read well," she said to Lucy Aikin, "till nine years old." "Oh, Joanna," cried her sister, "not till eleven." "I made my father melancholy breakfasts," she continued, "for I used to say my lessons to him then, and I always cried over it, and yet he used to say, 'This girl is not stupid neither; she is handy at her needle, and understands common matters well enough.'"

It was arranged to send Joanna and her sister Agnes to Miss Macdonald's boarding-school in Glasgow. Here Joanna learned to embroider on satin, and got a smattering of drawing and dancing. Ladies' colleges and advanced education for women were undreamt of in those days. Had such advantages existed it is doubtful if Joanna's abilities would have shone very prominently forth. The only branch of study that she showed any decided inclination for was mathematics; of her own accord she mastered some portions of Euclid; but at school, by her sister's report, she was principally distinguished as being the ringleader of all pranks and frolics, and used to entertain her companions with an endless string of stories of her own invention. She was also addicted to clambering on the roof of the house to act over her scenes alone and in secret.

"Let us conjure up," says Miss Tytler, "if we can, the old Glasgow boarding-school, with its small rooms and dim tallow-candles. There stand the host of eager girls in their short-waisted, short-sleeved gowns and mittens, with their buckles, brooches, necklaces, plaids, scarfs, breast-knots, and the Highland bonnets which are still worn by girls. The acknowledged mistress of the ceremonies and the first lady of the troop is the under-sized girl with marked features and grey eyes. Miss Macdonald and her governess look for a moment on the scene from the elevation of their huge toopees and barricade of ruffles; they dismiss authoritatively

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the excited rabble and retire to their cosy suppers, where they admit in confidence the mother-wit of Miss Jack Baillie."

When Joanna was fifteen her father was appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University. The family accordingly removed to Glasgow, and lived near the college in the High Street. Jacky was pleased at this promotion, proud to be near the old cathedral of St. Mungo's, and of being a member of that select college society which was presided over by Miss Mally Campbell. But Dr. Baillie only enjoyed his professorship for two years; he died just when Joanna had reached the age of seventeen. The widow and her daughters were now left almost entirely dependent on the bounty of the Hunters, who were brothers out of a million. Dr. John Hunter, the uncle after whom Joanna had been called, was married and had a family, but Dr. William Hunter was a bachelor; he welcomed his sister, Mrs. Baillie, and her daughters, to his place of Long Calderwood, in the middle ward of Lanark; he adopted his nephew Matthew, and sent him to Balliol College, Oxford. The quiet country house life at Lanark, after the busy hum of Glasgow, may perhaps have seemed irksome to the two girls now just entering womanhood. Joanna, though shy, was beginning to be considered clever and capable. She had written some Scotch songs, which were sung round the ingle hearths of the neighbourhood, and she showed a calm determination which it was supposed she inherited from her mother. Already she "cast an awe" over her companions. In 1783, when she was twenty-one, she accompanied her mother and sister back to Glasgow, and spent the winter there. She was now quite grown up—not handsome, below the middle height, with large square features; her hair grew low down on her capacious forehead, her grey eyes were large and thoughtful, though sometimes humorous, her mouth was wide, and her chin slightly projecting. Altogether, though her face had little beauty, it was frank and sensible.

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Her sister Agnes had the advantage of her in looks. Joanna says to her—

> "Thy fairer face and sprightlier courtesy,
> A truth that from my youthful vanity
> Lay not concealed, did for the sisters twain,
> Where'er we went, the greater favour gain."

Another change soon came to the Baillie family. Dr. William Hunter died and left all his possessions to his nephew Matthew, Joanna's brother; left him his estate of Long Calderwood, his house in London, and the anatomical theatre, lecture-room, and museum attached to it. By doing this he disinherited his own brother, Dr. John, whose marriage had displeased him. Matthew Baillie, though a young man struggling up the ladder of the medical profession, with a mother and sisters partly dependent on his exertions, resolved on an heroic course of action. He gave up the estate of Long Calderwood to his uncle John, who had been counting on it as the presumptive heir, and brought his mother and sisters to live with him in London, at Windmill Street. It would be well if all family disputes about property could be so peaceably settled; it is certain that Matthew Baillie lost nothing by the sacrifice; his "basket and his store were abundantly blessed," and he rose to the very highest rank in his profession. Meanwhile the three Scotchwomen were often left to themselves to guide the house, to hem and sew, while the energetic young doctor was busy at his work in lecture-rooms and hospitals. Joanna perhaps found some resource for her busy brain and active mind in gazing out at the unfamiliar sights of the London streets, in exploring the skeleton wonders of the anatomical museum, or in going out into the literary society which she met at Mrs. John Hunter's house. This aunt-in-law of hers was a sister of Sir Everard Home, and had written some good songs, among which was the well-known *My mother bids me bind my hair*, which was set to music by Haydn.

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Some of the guests at Mrs. Hunter's *soirées* may have observed Joanna Baillie as a "stiff, solemn Scotch girl, uncouth and raw-boned in mind, small and light in person," and—in all probability—with nothing in her! But Joanna had a great deal in her, though it did not show on the surface, and was long in coming out. When she was twenty-nine she published anonymously a volume of miscellaneous poems. It was a failure; only one critic ventured to give a faint word of praise to the descriptions of Nature; the rest were silent, and the book died stillborn. Failure depresses the weak; it rouses the strong; it animated Byron to write *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers;* it now prompted Joanna Baillie to turn her talents into the right direction. One summer's afternoon she sat sewing by her mother in the grim, oppressive house in the hot, stuffy London street. Her brother was out. What were Joanna's thoughts brooding on? What ideas flashed in those great grey eyes and flitted underneath that capacious brow? Was she thinking of the braes of the Calder, of the burn that she had paddled in during her childhood? of the old Glasgow Cathedral, with its crypt, its dripping aisle, its legends of Rob Roy and the Covenanters? Not so; it had just occurred to her that she had made a grand mistake—that not poetry, but the drama, was her true vocation in literature. At once the spark caught, the fire of inspiration was in a blaze. She went straight to her room and sketched out the plan of a tragedy called *Arnold.* For three months she worked at it till it was finished, then it was flung into the waste-paper basket, or used as curl-papers by her and her sister. After this, eight long years went by. The Reign of Terror passed, Robespierre, Danton, and Madame Roland perished at the guillotine, the American colonies revolted, kingdoms were upheaved, the earth was deluged in blood and tears. All this time the quiet, steadfastly-fixed Scotchwoman was building up her *Plays on the Passions.* She had a regular plan, from which she never swerved by a hair's-breadth.

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One particular Passion was to be illustrated by a tragedy and a comedy; it was to be developed from its source upwards; first the germ, then the bud, and so on to the end. *Basil* illustrated Love from its first dawning till it obtained complete possession of its victim. *De Montford* illustrated Hatred, the poisonous effect of a firmly-rooted antipathy till it destroyed everything but itself. Joanna intended to work a reform in play-writing; the interest was to depend, not on the circumstances, but on the characters of the people that moved and spoke. She studied Shakespeare, no doubt, but she studied her own ideas far more; they were her principal guide. Meanwhile changes had come to the little household. Dr. Matthew Baillie had married Miss Denman, and his mother and sisters had left the married couple alone in Windmill Street, and had gone to Colchester. But London was still a magnet, and so they kept hovering about the vast Babylon without actually settling down. It was during this transition period of family life that Joanna brought out (in 1798), when she was thirty-seven, her first volume of *Plays on the Passions*. She still wrote anonymously, with all that Scotch caution and shrinking dislike to publicity which Lady Nairn and Lady Anne Barnard showed to such a remarkable extent. It was generally suspected that the author was a man, though suspicion also rested on Mrs. John Hunter, as the book was dedicated to Dr. Matthew Baillie, Joanna's brother. The following year (1799) the *Plays* had begun to make their way. "This winter," says Miss Berry in her *Diary* for '99, "the first question on every one's lips is, 'Have you read the series of *Plays*?' Everybody talks in raptures of the tragedies, and of the introduction as a most admirable piece of criticism. Sir G. Beaumont, who was with us yesterday morning, says he never expected to see such tragedies in his life; and Charles Fox, to whom he had sent them, is in such raptures with them that he has written a powerful critique of nine pages on the subject." Mr. Fox's favourite was *Basil*. A

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much higher order of imagination is required to write a tragedy than to write a novel. There are three ways of writing a novel—the narrative form, in which the author is allowed to tell us all about his various characters, their previous history, their loves, their hates, their looks, their dress. He may also treat us to his own reflections on different subjects, and be as discursive as he pleases. Secondly, there is the autobiographical style, in which the leading person tells his own story, lays bare every secret of his soul, and relates how he is affected to others and they to him. Lastly, there is the old-fashioned letter style, introduced by Rousseau in his *Nouvelle Heloïse*, in which each of the leading characters tell their respective stories, and turn themselves inside out for the benefit of the public. But in a play much must be conveyed rather than expressed plainly; a word, a sentence, a passing exclamation, may reveal a whole history of emotion; the author must never indulge in his own reflections; he must be solely occupied in making his people speak for themselves as such people ought to speak. In this power Joanna Baillie stood pre-eminent; she wrote comedies, but she did not excel in the lighter scenes of life; it was when she came to represent a human soul torn with violent passion that her real power came out. The bewildering effect of a sudden overwhelming feeling is brought out when Count Basil joins his officers after the procession of the Princess Victoria through the streets of Mantua. Rosenberg says—

> "That olive branch
> The Princess bore herself of fretted gold
> Was exquisitely wrought; I marked it once
> Because she held it in so white a hand.
> BASIL (*in a quick voice*). Marked you her hand? I did not see her hand,
> And yet she waved it twice."

Here is shown the true effect of a strong passion which swallows up details, does not observe the whiteness of a

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hand or the form of a finger because the soul is thrown into a turmoil which bears trifles away with it like straws on a mighty river. Again, in the scene with the Duke, when after Basil's determination to depart and join Pescara, all his resolutions are scattered to the winds by the sudden entrance of Victoria—

"DUKE. Your third day's march will to his presence bring
Your valiant troops. Said you not so, my lord?

Enter VICTORIA, *the* COUNTESS, *and* LADIES.

BASIL (*who changes countenance*). Yes, I believe—I think . . . I know not . . . well;
Yes, please your Grace, we march by break of day.

DUKE. Nay, *that* I know; I asked you, noble Count,
When you expect th' imperial force to join?

BASIL. When it shall please your Grace . . . I crave your pardon;
I somewhat have mistaken of your words.

DUKE. You are not well! Your colour changes, Count.
What is the matter?

BASIL. A dizzy mist that swims before my sight—
A ringing in mine ears—'tis strange enough—
'Tis slight—'tis nothing worth—'tis gone already."

There is no attempt at fine writing here, but in half a line, in a hasty movement, even in mere silence, light breaks in upon us, we see the path through which passion has already travelled, the dreary way which stretches beyond, and the dark and inevitable end, for Basil dies from the loss of honour caused by his love for the fair Victoria.

The tragedy of *De Montfort* illustrated Hatred. De Montfort, his ear sharpened to agonizing acuteness by his dominant passion, catches the sound of his enemy's step upon the stair long before it is heard by Friburg and the others present. He is addressing the Countess Friburg:—

"He cannot rashly praise who praises thee,
For he were dull indeed. (*Stopping short as if he heard something.*)

LADY. How dull indeed?

DE MONTFORT. I should have said. It has escaped me now. (*Listening again as if he heard something.*)

JANE (*to* DE MONTFORT). What? Hear you aught?

DE MONTFORT (*hastily*). 'Tis nothing.

JANE. Some one approaches.

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FRIBURG. No; 'tis a servant who ascends.
He will not come so soon.
DE MONTFORT (*off his guard*). 'Tis Rezenvelt. I heard his well-known foot,
From the first staircase, mounting step by step.
FRIBURG. How quick an ear thou hast for distant sounds!
I heard them not."

The character of Jane de Montfort was especially intended by Joanna Baillie for Mrs. Siddons, just as De Montfort, the brother, was marked out for John Kemble. The description of Jane de Montfort, Campbell the poet says, was a perfect picture of the great Sarah Siddons, then in the prime of her powers. To see her people of rank went and dined at the piazzas of Covent Garden at three o'clock in order to get places, "and all the gentlemen cry and all the ladies are in fits." It is worth while to get a glimpse of what this queen of the stage was in the eyes of Joanna Baillie:—

"LADY. How looks her countenance?
PAGE. So queenly, so commanding, and so noble,
I shrank at first in awe; but when she smiled,
For so she did to see me so abashed,
Methought I could have compassed sea and land
To do her bidding.
LADY. Is she young or old?
PAGE. Neither if right I guess, but she is fair,
For Time hath laid his hand so gently on her,
As he too had been awed.
LADY. The foolish stripling!
She hath bewitched thee. Is she large in stature?
PAGE. So stately and so graceful in her form,
I thought at first her stature was gigantic.
But on a near approach I found, in truth,
She scarcely doth surpass the middle size.
LADY. What is her garb?
PAGE. I cannot well describe the fashion of it.
She is not decked in any gallant trim,
But seems to me clad in the usual weeds
Of high habitual state, for as she moves
Wide flows her robe in many a waving fold,
As I have seen unfurlèd banners play
With a soft breeze.
LADY. Thine eyes deceive thee, boy.
It is an apparition thou hast seen.
FRIBURG. It is an apparition he has seen,
Or it is Jane de Montfort."

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"Make me more Jane de Montforts," said Mrs. Siddons to Joanna Baillie at the close of their first interview. The Kembles were as much taken with the play as Miss Baillie was with them, and in April, 1800, *De Montfort* was put upon the stage of Drury Lane. Here indeed was a triumph for the quiet minister's daughter. The epilogue was written by the Duchess of Devonshire, the scenery and decorations were the best that could be had, and Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble took the parts of the hero and heroine. Whether Joanna herself was present we are not told, but *De Montfort* was well received by a large and critical audience. It only held its place on the stage, however, for eleven nights. If Shakspeare "means ruin" to theatrical managers, Joanna Baillie could hardly complain if her play was too good for the public taste.

In the autumn of 1801 she, her mother and sister, established themselves at Hampstead, and Mrs. Barbauld mentions the quiet-looking young lady who went to Mr. Barbauld's chapel, and who looked as if she had never been guilty of writing a play in her life. For some time, at least at Hampstead, she was not publicly known as the writer of the *Plays*. Lucy Aikin says she well remembers the two Miss Baillies arriving to pay a visit at Mrs. Barbauld's. The subject of the anonymous tragedies was brought forward, and the author was lavishly praised. But Joanna sat mum; she would not betray herself, and Agnes rushed forward to bear the brunt of the conversation, leaving the unsuspected authoress "snug in the asylum of her taciturnity." She never talked much, was fond of shuffling off on others her fair share in the conversation, though at times her powerful eye would kindle with all a poet's fire, while her language rose for a few minutes to sudden eloquence. The acuteness and originality of her mind was best shown in her off-hand remarks. "Now and then," says Miss Aikin, "when I have been on my way to relate to her something which I thought might amuse her, I have said to myself, 'What will be her

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comment? No, that I cannot anticipate, but I am sure that it will be the best thing said on the occasion.'" Mr. Crabb Robinson mentions in his Diary having met Sir Humphrey and Lady Davy when they had hardly finished their honeymoon. Miss Joanna Baillie turned to Wordsworth and said, "We have witnessed a *picturesque happiness*."

The second volume of *Plays* came out in 1803. Among these new tragedies was one on Ambition, called *Ethwald*. Jeffrey now opened out a broadside on Miss Baillie and her theory in the *Edinburgh Review*. *Ethwald* bore, he said, a slavish resemblance to *Macbeth*. He ridiculed the idea of three pitched battles fought upon the stage, five or six assassinations, and an act opening with the view of a field covered with dead and dying. He did not deny that Joanna Baillie had a powerful genius, that her talents far surpassed any contemporary writer for the stage, but he condemned her plan of illustrating one particular passion in each tragedy. Passion must have some other passion to encounter and overcome, and a certain portion of our sympathies must be given to the fate and feelings of those who are the objects and victims of the ruling passion in the hero. There were grains of truth in the article, but it was bitter and unjust, and Joanna Baillie felt it most acutely.

Her next volume contained one of her best plays, *Constantine Paleologus*. The subject was taken from Gibbon's account of the siege of Constantinople by the Turks, and Constantine was the last of the Cæsars. This subject had pressed upon Joanna's mind when she had no thought of writing at all. "It *would* be written upon," she says. She now numbered a new friend who had been an admirer of her writings—no less a personage than the author of *Marmion*. "What do you think of your own genius as a poet in comparison with Burns?" asked Ballantyne of Sir Walter. "There is no comparison," answered Scott. "We ought not to be named in the same day. If you want to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius in the

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country." What must have been her feelings when she read the following passage in *Marmion*, and heard herself described as snatching the "Wild harp, that silent hung by silver Avon's holy shore, Till twice a hundred years rolled o'er,

> "When she, the bold enchantress, came
> With fearless hand and heart in flame,
> From the pale willow snatched the treasure,
> And swept it with a kindred measure,
> Till Avon's swans—while rung the grove
> With Montfort's hate and Basil's love—
> Awakening at the inspired strain,
> Deemed their own Shakspeare lived again"?

Joanna read these lines through without pause or faltering, and only betrayed a want of self-command when some one present gave way to a burst of tears.

Sir Walter made a pilgrimage out to Hampstead, and he and his countrywoman became friends for life. Henceforth she was his *cummer* or comrade, and his best letters are written to her. Mrs. Baillie, who had been blind and paralysed for some years, died in 1806. Joanna's attention to her had been the admiration of the little Hampstead world, and the two sisters now resolved to visit Scotland, where they had not been for twenty-one years. They went to their old haunts at Glasgow and Lanark, and Joanna was found by her friends to be little altered, Scotchy as of yore—steadier, graver, sadder perhaps, than she had been before her authoress career, but with the same freedom from vanity and affectation—a reliable "canty body," with a love for old legends. After leaving Glasgow she and her sister made a tour in the West Highlands. This wild, romantic scenery was unfamiliar to the homekeeping Scotchwoman, and she was so overcome as to shed tears while she gazed at the falls of Moness. She would not be torn away from the sight and sound for an hour, though she was drenched by the rain which fell heavily all the time she was in the glen. A visit to the Scotts at Edinburgh, in their well-known house at

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Castle Street, was another event in Joanna's life. Some years afterwards Mrs. Walter Scott (as she then was) was spoken of disparagingly in a London drawing-room, and Joanna Baillie gave her this good word: "When I visited her I saw a great deal to like; she seemed to admire and look up to her husband; she was very kind to her guests. Her children were well-bred, the house in excellent order, and she had some smart roses in her cap, and I did not like her the less for that." It is always a virtue to defend the absent, but Joanna's kindly nature was shown in many other ways. She befriended a shoemaker-poet called Struthers. Backed by Sir Walter Scott, she induced Mr. Constable to publish *The Poor Man's Sabbath*, for which Struthers got between thirty and forty pounds—quite a windfall for the worthy man, who was probably a better shoemaker than a poet. Joanna also wrote an epilogue and prologue for her friend Miss Berry's play of *Fashionable Friends*, which was acted at Strawberry Hill. It was a kindly trait in her disposition, for she could have but little sympathy with such a comedy. The steadfastness of her nature was shown when at Edinburgh by her obstinate refusal to be introduced to Jeffrey. She bluntly, almost rudely, resisted his overtures. She considered that he had attacked her pet theory without due regard to justice and propriety, and so she washed her hands of him.

When the Scotts came to London, little Sophia (afterwards Mrs. Lockhart) was sent out to Hampstead to the kind care of the Miss Baillies. She, no doubt, found a congenial atmosphere in this Scotch household. Dinner was before four, and afterwards there was a walk on the Heath. Joanna's friends were Lucy Aikin, the Miss Berrys, and Lady Byron. Sometimes in September the Aikins had Sunday dinner-parties, "animated by a few forlorn males forsaken of their women-kind and glad to be noticed." Mrs. Damer had told Joanna Baillie a story of the West Highlands. This story now brought forth fruit, and was

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dramatised under the name of the *Family Legend;* Joanna had a particular fondness for it, and called it her Highland play. Sir Walter Scott never rested till he persuaded Mr. Siddons (son of the great Sarah) to bring it out in the theatre at Edinburgh on the 30th of January, 1810.

"You have only to imagine," he wrote to Joanna, "all that you could wish to give success to a play, and your conceptions will still fall short of the complete and decided triumph. The house was crowded to a most extraordinary degree; many people had come from your native capital of the west. Everything that pretended to distinction, whether from rank or literature, was in the boxes, and in the pit such an aggregation of humanity as I have seldom witnessed in the same space. I sat the whole time shaking for fear lest a scene-shifter or a carpenter, or some of the subaltern actors, should make some blunder and interrupt the feeling of deep and general interest which soon seized on the whole audience, pit, boxes, and gallery. The scene on the rock struck the greatest possible effect on the audience, and you heard nothing but sobs on all sides. The banquet scene was equally impressive, and so was the combat. Mrs. Siddons supported her part incomparably; the scenery was very good, and the rock so contrived as to place her in a very precarious situation. Siddons announced the play for the rest of the week, which was received not only with a thunder of applause, but with cheering and throwing up of hats and handkerchiefs. Mrs. Scott had a party of thirty friends in one small box, which she was obliged to watch like a clucking hen till she had gathered her whole flock, for the crowd was insufferable. I am going to see the *Legend* again to-night."

Joanna's next volume of plays contained *Orra*, a tragedy on Fear. Sir Walter had sent her an Iona pebble set as a brooch, with the motto in Gaelic, "Strike the lyre." She

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now answered that she was getting her knitting-needles in order to knit him a purse, and that after this volume she would write no more. *Orra*, however, awoke his warmest praise. After reading it to himself, "Terry read it a third time aloud, and I have seldom seen a little audience so affected as during the whole fifth act." The outlaw's song was afterwards set to music by Sir H. Bishop, and is familiar to most of us :—

"The wildfire dances in the fen,
The red star sheds its ray,
Uprouse ye then! my merry, merry men,
It is our opening day."

It has a dash and spirit that reminds us of the girl who sat her horse as if it was a bit of herself. Joanna Baillie was a charming Scotch song writer. To her we are indebted for *The Weary Pund of Tow*, and for *Wooed and Married and a'*, which is an inimitable picture of delicacy and maiden bashfulness :—

"She turned and she blushed and she smiled,
And she lookit sae bashfully down,
The pride of her heart was beguiled,
And she played wi' the sleeve of her gown,
She twirled the tag of her lace,
And she nippet her bonnet sae blue,
Syne blinket sae sweet in his face,
And aff like a mawkin (*hare*) she flew,
Wooed and married and a',
Wi' Johnnie to roose her and a',
She thinks herself very weel aff
To be wooed and married and a'."

We may well ask, was it really an old maid that wrote this? Just as Jean Adams, an elderly unmarried woman, composed that true wifely song, *There is nae Luck about the House*, so Joanna Baillie, a staid spinster, excelled in delicate Scotch love-songs.

The quiet life at Hampstead went unbrokenly on. Mr. Crabb Robinson mentions that he found Wordsworth in

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Oxford Road; they got into the fields and walked to Hampstead; they met Miss Joanna Baillie and accompanied her home. "She is small in figure, and her gait is mean and shuffling, but her manners are those of a well-bred woman. She has none of the unpleasant airs common to literary ladies. Her conversation is sensible. She possesses, apparently, considerable information, is prompt without being forward, and has a fixed judgment of her own without any disposition to force it on others." Wordsworth said of her with warmth, "If I had to present any one to a foreigner as a model of an English gentlewoman it would be Joanna Baillie." This verdict was endorsed by Lucy Aikin, who says, "She was the only person I have ever known towards whom fifty years of close acquaintance, while they deepened my affection wore away nothing of my reverence. Of all the literary women I have ever seen she made the deepest impression on me. She was an innate gentlewoman, and over her meekness and simplicity there was a genuine dignity; her reserve had much of caution, but nothing of cowardice. She had perfect self-possession and courage to say what she thought right." At a dinner given by the Miss Berrys in June, 1813, Joanna was one of ten ladies who, with twenty-six gentlemen, were invited to meet Madame de Staël. But the great "Corinne" could not make out any one so totally different from herself. With Maria Edgeworth the case was altered, and the Irish and Scotch authoresses became friends and correspondents. A great event in Joanna Baillie's life was seeing the *Family Legend* acted at the new Drury Lane Theatre. She went with Sir Walter Scott to witness the first performance, which must have been a thrilling one to her. Her fond hope of purifying and ennobling the stage seemed on the point of being realized. In 1836 she brought out a complete edition of her Plays, including some new ones—*Romiero*, a tragedy on Jealousy, and *Henriquez*, on Remorse. Henriquez, a general of high rank, finds a letter which he imagines

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is intended for his wife Leonora by his friend Juen. He lies in wait, murders Don Juen in a wood, and afterwards discovers that the note was intended for Mencia, his wife's sister. Hence the remorse that follows, which is wonderfully brought out. He goes to the confessional to pour out his crime to the friar, and after a long vigil hears the warder's call to note the rising morn.

> " 'The morn!' he cries, 'and what have I to do with morn?
> My very soul within me is abhorrent
> Of every pleasant thing.'"

The Plays, especially *Henriquez*, were greeted with a burst of praise. Even the *Edinburgh Review* became enthusiastic, and Professor Wilson in *Blackwood* says: "We behold floating in the cerulean vault of poetry a fair cloud that assumes a human shape, and we think of Joanna Baillie. All that a poetess should be that lady is—pure, gentle, serene, and stately. Tighe, and Hemans, and Mitford, and Bowles, and Landon are all names pleasant to the soul and not to be forgotten, but hers is the greatest of all." It was acknowledged that while some women authors were graceful and amusing and fanciful, Joanna Baillie had a condensed strength and a grasp of her subject such as few men have.

A last attempt was made to get her Plays acted, and *Henriquez* and the *Separation* were brought out simultaneously at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Mr. Vandenhoff took the part of Henriquez, and yet this fine play was treated with coldness, and the notice of its repetition was received with disapproval. The critics declared that nothing made them despair so much of the revival of true dramatic taste. After 1836 Joanna Baillie published no more. She was then seventy-four, and Harriet Martineau says that a sweeter picture of old age was never seen. Her figure was small, light, and active; her countenance in its expression of serenity harmonised wonderfully with her gay

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conversation and her cheerful voice. Her eyes were beautiful, dark, bright, and penetrating, with the full innocent gaze of childhood. Her face was altogether comely, and her dress did justice to it. She wore her own silvery hair and a mob-cap, with its delicate lace border fitting close round her face. She was well dressed in handsome dark silks, and her lace caps and collars looked always new. No Quaker was ever neater. In her whole appearance was something for even the passing stranger to admire, and never anything for the most familiar friend to wish otherwise. "No one," says Miss Aikin, "would take Joanna Baillie for a married woman. An innocent and maidenly grace hovered round her to the end of her old age. It was one of her peculiar charms, and often brought to my mind the lines addressed to the vowed Isabella in *Measure for Measure*—

"'I hold you for a thing enskied and saintly.'"

In the "Life of Mrs. Jameson" there is an interesting account of a visit which Mrs. Jameson and her niece paid to Joanna Baillie. Mrs. Jameson was an old friend, but little Geraldine, her niece, fed on poetry from her earliest years, had never seen the author of *Basil*, and was full of glowing ideas about her. She was rather disappointed when she found herself nestling by the side of a "gently smiling white-haired old lady, who amused her child-visitor with tales of second-sight and thrilling ghost stories. The other old lady of the house, the sister Agnes to whom Mrs. Joanna devoted the tenderest care, and who sat by the fireside wearing the quaintest of black bonnets, was a bewildering figure, and occupied a large place in the confused recollections of the visit so much looked forward to."

Lady Chatterton gives us another glimpse of Joanna Baillie. She mentions having met "dear old Joanna Baillie, looking so humble, unpretending, and full of simplicity; her figure so slim and well-made. Her new old-fashioned dress, too, which could not have been worn more than once or twice,

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yet made according to the fashion of ten or twelve years ago, and smelling sweet of the rose leaves and lavender, with which it had probably been shut up for years, delighted me, and so did the little old lace cap that encircled her peaceful face. The calm repose of her manner, the cheery and hopeful countenance, seems to do me good. It was so unruffled by the flutter and excitement of modern times."

Joanna forgave her former enemy Jeffrey. He used to go out to Hampstead expressly to see her, and mentions that he found her as fresh and natural as ever, and as little like the tragic muse. She was neither blind, deaf, nor torpid, though she reached the patriarchal age of almost ninety years. She died February 4, 1851, without suffering, in full possession of her faculties. Her sister Agnes survived her. Her life was as placid and uneventful as a life could be, and yet what stirring scenes passed before her mind's eye! Ambition, hatred, remorse, jealousy, rose like armed spectres and demanded that she should set down their fatal progress, and trace them through every varying phase. She did so, and though her life-purpose was to a certain extent defeated, she at any rate delivered her own soul and spoke her message to those who would hear it.

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VIII.

LADY NAIRN.

1766–1845.

The Oliphants—"Sturdy little Car"—Jacobite associations—The Flower of Strathearn—County meetings—Highland flings—Begins to write Scotch songs—The *Land o' the Leal*—Marriage with Major Nairn—The Scottish minstrel—Death of Lord Nairn—Travels with her son—Returns alone to the "auld house of Gask"—Death.

ACCORDING to Kingsley's *Three Fishers*, men must work and women must weep. But this is not the invariable fate of either. Sometimes men have to fight and women to sing. A voice is occasionally given to the weaker sex, which thrills like a trumpet, and brings back the memory of the days that are no more. Such a voice was given to Carolina Oliphant, afterwards Lady Nairn. Most of us are familiar with her *Land o' the Leal*, that one perfect Scottish hymn, but the same hand which penned those most pathetic words also wrote some of the best Jacobite songs which exist, all aglow with spirit and fire.

Carolina Oliphant came from a genuine fighting stock—her ancestors, on both sides, were Jacobites to the backbone. The Oliphants, of Gask, her father's race—the Robertsons, of Strowan, her mother's people—were cousins, knit together by the same ties and the same politics. They had all been out in the '45, and had clung to the desperate fortunes of Prince Charles Edward with the obstinate tenacity of the

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true Scottish nature. They had been with the young Chevalier, "when he kept court at Holyrood," they had followed him to Derby, they had been in the disastrous retreat to Carlisle, and had shared in the bloody fight of Culloden. After that fatal day, the families of Oliphant, Robertson, and Nairn (all cousins) sailed in the same boat, and escaped from the east coast of Scotland to Sweden.

It was at Paris, where the fugitives had become attached to the mimic court of the exiled Stuarts at St. Germain's, that the marriage of Carolina's father and mother took place, and a fresh bond was made between the kinsfolk. Of six children—four daughters and two sons—Carolina was the third. Two daughters, Margery, or Madge, and Amelia, came first, then Carolina and Laurence the young Laird; Margaret and Charles completed the little family.

It was at the ancestral home of Gask, to which the exiled Oliphants had returned, that Carolina was born in the year 1766. The "auld hoose" lay in the Strath of the Earn, between the Grampians and the Ochils. It was built on a brae above the river, with a "burn" or brook wandering about amongst the groves and thickets which surrounded it. Up in the Highlands, in the land of brown heath, of mountains and lochs—Prince Charlie's country—feudal customs and old traditions lingered long. Plenty of stories were told in the Oliphant nursery about the gallant young hero of her race, the hope of the Stuarts. Carolina, or "sturdy little Car," as she was called, drank them all in with greedy ears. Though she was so well-behaved that at two years old she was brought in from the nursery on Sunday, and "sat at the family reading as prim as any there," yet she had an ardent and enthusiastic soul.

The exiled Stuarts, and Charles Edward, handsome, brave, and unfortunate, at the head of them, awoke all the innate chivalry of her nature. We can understand loyalty in the present day; our own royal family inspires us with affection,

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respect, and esteem; but we cannot, perhaps, thoroughly enter into the passionate devotion which the true Jacobites felt for the house of Stuart, and for the gallant, ill-fated Prince for whom they had willingly risked their lives and fortunes.

At the house of Gask, a lock of Prince Charlie's hair, his bonnet, spurs, cockade and crucifix, were preserved as the choicest family relics.

The laird of Gask, Carolina's father, refused to recognize the Elector of Hanover as King of Scotland; and he dismissed his chaplain because, on the death of Charles Edward, that time-serving minister took the oath of allegiance to George III. The fiery old Jacobite hoped against hope, fondly believed that the Cardinal of York might yet be Henry IX., and that the King might "enjoy his own again." All these prejudices were shared to the fullest extent by sturdy little Car. She longs to go back to that memorable "Monday morning, right early in the year, when Charlie came to our town;" and she breaks out into the rapturous refrain:—

"Charlie is my darling,
My darling, my darling;
Charlie is my darling,
The young Chevalier."

Again, in another song she hears, "how the news from Moidart cam yestre'en; royal Charlie is landed." She sees the gathering of the clans; "they come hurrying thro' the heather, Ronald, Donald a' thegither."

"And crown your rightfu' lawfu' king;
For wha'll be king but Charlie?"

Yet, once more, she tells how "he's ower the hills that I lo'e weel."

"My father's gane to fecht for him,
My brothers winna bide at hame;
My mither greets and prays for them,
And, deed, she thinks they're no to blame."

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And as the song proceeds, there comes a passion of genuine enthusiasm :—

> "Were I a laddie, I'd follow him too,
> Sae noble a look, sae princely an air,
> Sae gallant and bold, sae young and sae fair.
> Oh! did ye but see him, ye'd do as we've done;
> Hear him but ance, to his standard you'll run!"

How did such songs spring up in the mind of this calm, aristocratic Scotch lassie? Like seed, fallen on fruitful ground, which takes root downwards and blossoms upwards, they were gradually developed, till they became real flowers of song, which could never be imitated, and never excelled.

Meanwhile, the sturdy little maiden was passing from childhood to girlhood. When she was eight years old her mother died, leaving this last injunction to her four daughters: "See which will be the best bairn, and stay longest with papa." The "auld hoose" was afterwards presided over by old Mrs. Oliphant, or Lady Gask, as she was often called; and the girls had a Mrs. Cramond, from Perth, who acted as their governess, and taught them "the practice of ye needle, principles of religion and loyalty, a good carriage, and talking *tolerable good English.*" She only received a salary of £10 or £12 a year, a fair sum in those days, whatever might be thought of it now. Besides Mrs. Cramond's tuition, an Italian fiddler came once a week, to teach the laird's young people dancing and music. Carolina got on so well with her harpsichord that she won the approval of the famous Scotch fiddler, Neil Gow.

She soon passed out of her "sturdy little Car" days, and became "pretty Miss Car," otherwise the Flower of Strathearn. Here is a description of her from the *Songstresses of Scotland:* "Tall in figure, and dignified in gait, with dark eyes and hair, an aquiline nose, and small mouth, her hands and arms well shaped. Her portrait, painted in middle life by Watson Gordon, gives the idea of

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an aristocratic beauty, sensitive, but self-controlled." To the last she was very *distingué* in brow and nose. The country houses about were full of gay young people, and there were plenty of merry-makings during the year. Carolina, who took her turn as reigning belle, gives an amusing account of one of these "county meetings." "The leddies buskit braw, the gentlemen in waistcoats white, and tartans too; Sir John, wha aye maun lead the dancin' on; and Leddy Bet in her turban prim, a wee bit velvet under her chin. The Major, and his sister, too, he in the bottle green, she in the blue.

"'Some years sin' that goun was new
At our county meeting.'"

This worthy canty pair have their nephew Blair, "o' sense and siller he's nae great share, tho' he's the king of the meeting." Then there's the member and provost, the doctor in his yellow wig, with his fat wife wha' takes a jig. Miss Betty, too, is there, "wi' her sonsy face and bricht red hair, dancing till she can dance nae mair." There's "branty Bill," and "heaps o' bonnie country lasses, together wi' the heiress o' the Gowdenlea, the laird, the sheriff, and Lord Bawbee." More than forty could be reckoned. Reels and country dances are the order of the day, for a waltz or dull quadrille would spoil the county meeting. At the end comes a real Highland fling; and then

"Gow draws his bow, folk haste away,
While some are glad, and some are wae.
A' blithe to meet some ither day
At our county meeting."

Alas! such jovial, hearty gatherings as these are amongst the things of the past. How well we can imagine Carolina Oliphant, with her tall figure, her aquiline nose, and her keen, dark eyes, which rapidly scan the nimble groups as they bob up and down. She herself is one of the belles of

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the ball; suitors buzz around her, but she keeps her heart for her cousin, Captain Nairn, to whom it is always understood that she is engaged. He is a landless soldier, nine years older than she is; but with her wealth of faith and hope, she finds it easy to wait till he has gained promotion, and is able to claim her as his bride.

Meanwhile, changes came to the inhabitants of the "auld hoose" of Gask. The two elder Oliphant girls, Margery and Amelia, married two loyal Stuarts, lairds of neighbouring glens. Robertson of Strowan, Carolina's maternal grandfather, was restored to his forfeited estates; and the old laird of Gask died, full of years and honours, on the New Year's Day of 1792, when his daughter, Carolina, was twenty-five. She was now called upon to preside over her brother's house, and she took her position with a calm dignity which seemed to belong to her. At the young laird's accession to the estates he gave a dinner to his tenantry, and sang a new version of an old Scotch song, which is said to be his sister's first attempt at song-writing. She was a great admirer of Burns, and had persuaded her brother to subscribe to one of the first editions of his poems. One day, as she drove through the country fair of Gask, she saw a common song-book used by the Highland folk, and a great wish seized her to write songs for the people, which would be at once humorous and pure, comic and not coarse. So she sat at her desk, and wrote long and often. Her friends guessed that she was writing love-letters to Captain Nairn, and she did not undeceive them.

There was a strong prejudice against women writers in those days. It was considered a disgrace for a woman

> "To have ink on her thumb when I kissed her hand,"

and this Carolina Oliphant seems to have felt. She never failed in her duties as the hostess of her brother's hospitable house, whose doors were always open to the passing stranger. She presided at balls, and executed the

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perilous task of carving for a dinner-party which numbered half a hundred Scotch cousins. But her pile of songs grew, nevertheless. To this period of her life belong a great many of her Jacobite songs, together with *John Tod* and *The Laird o' Cockpen.*" Who is not familiar with that wonderful laird who wanted a wife his "braw hoose to keep," and decided on "McClish's ae daughter o' Claverse-ha'-Lee, the penniless lass wi' a long pedigree"? Mistress Jean was busy making elder-flower wine, but she "puts off her apron and on her silk goun, her mutch wi' red ribbons, and gaed away doun."

> "Amazed was the laird when the leddy said nae.
> And often he thought, as he gaed through the glen,
> She's daft to refuse the Laird o' Cockpen."

The gaiety, the archness, the sly, innocent humour of the *Laird o' Cockpen*, is a remarkable contrast to the spirit and fire of the *Hundred Pipers*, or the passionate devotion of *Will ye no Come Back Again?* Minor and major chords were at Carolina Oliphant's disposal. She could strike all with equal success.

For three years Carolina Oliphant presided over her brother's house. When she was twenty-nine the young laird brought home a wife—the heiress of Ardblain—and Carolina had to sink into the position of number two in the household. Her marriage could not take place yet; Captain Nairn was still waiting for promotion, and the long engagement must last still longer.

A romantic episode now occurred in her life. Her brother had joined the Perthshire Light Dragoons, and during the panic of 1797, his regiment was ordered to Durham, and his wife and sister went with him. The Scotch Jacobite beauty was then thirty-two, but her charms were only in their meridian, for a certain royal Duke, who met her at a ball in Sunderland, admired her so much that, only for a few necessary hindrances, he would have offered her

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his hand and fortunes. It was a strange chance which threw this Jacobite of the Jacobites into the company of a relative of that hard Duke of Cumberland who dealt the Stuart race their death-blow.

Carolina Oliphant's days for writing Jacobite songs were almost over. In the same year (1797) she was saddened by the death of her youngest brother at Paris; and she sympathized intensely with her friend, Mrs. Campbell Colquhoun, who had lost her first-born child. It was after this, hoping to console the sorrowing mother, that the *Land o' the Leal* was written and sent to Mrs. Colquhoun, with many injunctions not to reveal the author's name.

Amidst all the harsh and hollow noises which are called songs, this of Lady Nairn's stands out "a pure and perfect chrysolite." What is a song after all? Carlyle has well explained it to be a "musical thought"; something that cannot be said, that must be sung, because it is melodious to its inmost depth. Such a song the *Land o' the Leal* undoubtedly is. Many women have had more imaginative power than Lady Nairn, few have had so much of the true spirit of song. She did not study verse making, she read little, she sang as the birds sing—because she must, she had no choice in the matter.

She returned to Scotland, and lived on with her brother and sister-in-law till 1806. In that year Captain Nairn at length got the brevet rank of Major, and was appointed Assistant Inspector-General of Barracks for Scotland. So the long-delayed marriage took place in the new house of Gask, the ceremony being performed by the family chaplain. A bride of forty-one and a bridegroom of fifty! Does that sound unromantic to unromantic ears? Probably it does; but, after all, are not constancy and long-tried truth the noblest things in the world? They have borne the burden and heat of day. Beside them, the extravagance of hot passion and the idle protestations of raw, untried youth seem poor and fleeting, which may or may not end in nothing.

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Major Nairn had won his reserved Scotch cousin, but so stately was she that she impatiently drew aside when he claimed the first kiss as her bridegroom. It was too public an exhibition, according to her fastidious ideas. Her affection for him was like a river running under trees—deep, concealed, but strong. He was the hero of her—

> "Robin is my ain gudeman,
> Now match him, carlins, 'gin ye can,
> For ilk ane whitest thinks her swan—
> But kind Robin lo'es me."

Mrs. Nairn and her "ain gudeman" took up their residence at Edinburgh, where Major Nairn's duties obliged him to live. The Laird of Strowan had built for his nephew and granddaughter a cottage in the suburbs, called after Mrs. Nairn, Carolina Cottage. Here, the only child of the faithful couple, a son, was born in 1808.

Among the very few intimate friends who visited and exchanged tea-drinkings with the Nairns were the Misses Hume, daughters of Baron Hume. These spinster ladies ruled the musical society at Edinburgh; and when Mr. Purdie, a music publisher, proposed bringing out a collection of national airs with suitable words, the Misses Hume consulted their friend Mrs. Nairn, who quite approved of the idea. Her songs were kept a profound secret from most of her friends, but the Misses Hume were admitted behind the scenes. A committee was formed, and though the proceedings were veiled in mystery, still Mr. Purdie found himself plentifully supplied with the ballads of all kinds. Mrs. Nairn was, of course, the great fountain head. She adopted no end of disguises; she wrote in a feigned hand, or got others to write for her. She signed the initials "S. M."—or "Scottish Minstrel," the title of the forthcoming volume; but her favourite signature was B. B., or Mrs. Bogan of Bogan. Several times she dressed herself up as an old lady, and called on Mr. Purdie, giving her name as Mrs. Bogan of Bogan; and her get up was so perfect and successful that

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the duped Mr. Purdie never dreamt of any deception, and took the disguised songstress as a genuine old Highland dame.

The Scottish Minstrel grew so fast, that when it was finished it had spread to six octavo volumes. Many questions were asked about B. B.'s and S. M.'s songs, but small satisfaction could be got from Mrs. Nairn, and no impertinent questions were answered by her. Among her best songs are *The Auld Hoose*, *We're a' Noddin*, *The Bonnie Brier-Bush*, and *Caller Herrin'*. With all her patrician tendencies, she thoroughly entered into the joys and sorrows of the people, their simple pleasures, and their innocent fun.

In 1824, after George IV.'s visit to Edinburgh, a Bill was passed in Parliament reversing a great many of the Scotch attainders, amongst them was the Baron's title of Nairn, which dated from the reign of Charles I. Major Nairn, as sole male-heir to the peerage, now took rank as Lord Nairn, but the estates belonging to the title were irrevocably lost. The estate of Nairn, in Perthshire, and the house where Prince Charlie had slept on his way from Blair (long ago thrown down) had been purchased by the Athole Murrays after the fatal '45, and could not be restored, even at the word of a king. An empty title was all that Lord and Lady Nairn got; but perhaps, to their minds, their lands were deemed well lost, for they had been lost in the cause of the idolized Stuarts.

Old age was coming on now. When the title was given back Lady Nairn was fifty-seven, and her husband sixty-six. He died in 1831, and his widow and her delicate son, who already showed symptoms of decline, left Edinburgh for Clifton. From Clifton they went to Ireland. They tried the sheltered air of Enniskerry, and then went to Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and Brussels. At Brussels consumption struck down the last Lord Nairn, and he died in his thirtieth year.

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His mother was now seventy-two, and she never recovered the shock. In vain she, her sister (Mrs. Keith), and one of her nieces went to Munich and Nice; the childless widow could not forget the churchyard at Brussels, where her last earthly hope lay buried. By degrees she fell into those extreme Calvinistic views which scowl at all pleasure, and put down all ties of affection as wrong and sinful. Lady Nairn's fine genius struggled, but it could not escape. "I have not the smallest pleasure," she writes, "in scenery, or anything external;" and adds (though the words seem forced), "but I know that things are working together for good." Hopeless and tearless, she spent some time at Paris, trying to work for bazaars, to live her sorrow down, and to look upon her love as carnal.

In 1843, when she was seventy-eight, her nephew Lawrance, now Laird of Gask, begged her to return to her old home. So she came back, and as she looked at the well-known banks and braes, at the moors and deer forests, she might well have exclaimed with Sir Walter Scott—

> "Yet not the landscape to mine eye
> Bears those bright hues that once it bore.
> The quiet lake, the balmy air,
> The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,
> Are they still such as once they were,
> Or is the dreary change in me?"

She loved to hear of the poor people around, and took an interest in the Free Church question, siding with the Free Church ministers, though she remained an Episcopalian to the last. She rejoiced in the rapid lapse of days, months, and years, even more than "when a too happy wife and mother, I eagerly wished the continuance of domestic happiness." One of her last poems, written a few years before her death is, *Would You be Young Again?* To this question she exclaims, "So would not I." She ends with a spark of her old fire—

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"Fly time! fly speedily!
Come life and light!"

Life and light were coming fast; she rallied from a stroke of palsy, but on the 25th of October, 1845, after a drive in her garden chair, a change took place, and on the 27th of October she passed away, in her seventy-ninth year.

She was buried in the grounds of Gask, on the site of an old kirk, surrounded by the old kirk-yard, and near it is an Episcopalian chapel, founded by her nephew and herself. The Grampian Hills are within sight, and the river Earn winds its lonely way along. It is a fitting resting-place for one who uttered nothing base, who left a name of which the countrymen of Burns may well be proud. It was not till after her death that a volume of her songs, *Lays of Strathearn*, was published with her name attached. A great many fugitive pieces were sung and printed, and she was not known as the authoress; but an edition of them has been now published by Dr. Rogers, and as many as possible of her songs and adaptations have been collected together into a convenient form.

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IX.

MRS. RADCLIFFE.

1764–1823.

The school of horror—Birth of Anne Ward—Marriage with Mr. Radcliffe—Early romances—*The Romance of the Forest*—*The Mysteries of Udolpho*—*The Italian*—Visit to Warwick Castle—Death—*Gaston de Blondeville* and posthumous poems.

THE very name of Mrs. Radcliffe calls up ideas of midnight, of haunted rooms, trap-doors, and secret passages. She was the leader of a school—the school of horror. Her romances were the rage during the end of the last century. Hazlitt said that he owed his love of moonlit night, autumn leaves, and decaying ruins to her influence. Byron condescended to imitate her, and Walter Scott was amongst her warmest admirers. "Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and even Walpole," he says, "though writing on an imaginative subject, are decidedly prose authors; Mrs. Radcliffe has a title to be considered as the first poetess of romantic fiction." She had a keen love for nature; no one ever has, or ever can, give such vivid pictures of gloomy forests and sombre castles as she did—they serve as a fitting background for the tales of terror which are to be acted in them. In Mrs. Radcliffe's hands, a large deserted room with crumbling furniture, becomes at once fearful and distinct; the leaves that rustle outside have a

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mysterious language of their own ; a dim corridor, a drop of blood on a turret staircase, a piece of faded tapestry, convey hints, shadowy suggestions which curdle the blood, and warn us of what we may expect. Moonlight, mystery, the moan of forest trees, the gleam of hidden lakes, solitude and secrecy are felt like an atmosphere. Mrs. Radcliffe never depended on her characters for the interest of her tales—her heroines have no variety ; Julia, Adeline, Emily, Elena, are all exquisitely lovely, cruelly persecuted, and perfect models of amiability, propriety, and the seven cardinal virtues. They all have an uncomfortable propensity for "fainting and falling senseless to the ground" ; and certainly Mrs. Radcliffe gives them plenty to faint about. What with banditti, mysterious screams, and artful plotters, her young ladies have a desperate time of it—no touch of humour, no gleam of brightness, no wit, relieve the picture. Mrs. Radcliffe has been rightly called the Salvator Rosa of fiction : her pictures in words, like his on canvas, are deep with gloom and heavy with oppression. A French critic said that no one knew better than Mrs. Radcliffe how to appeal to the secret superstition innate in the human heart. Most of us are superstitious, and these hints—these foreshadowings of the mysterious and unknown—awaken an answering chord within us. We *must* know the meaning of that veiled picture, that midnight shriek, that ghastly apparition. Before Mrs. Radcliffe's days, Colman declared :

> "A novel now is nothing more
> Than an old castle, and a creaking door,
> A distant hovel,
> Clanking of chains, a gallery, a light,
> Old armour, and a phantom all in white—
> And that's a novel."

It was reserved for Mrs. Radcliffe to put deeper tones into the picture ; to make the forests live, and to give a more poetic feeling to the mysterious castles and abbeys. The reaction has set in long ago, the present age loves realism,

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our heroines must all wear the latest fashions, our heroes must talk slang; everything must be like what we see, and feel, and know. Jane Austen was one of the first to lead the way, her shrewd common-sense filled her with profound contempt for the unreality of Mrs. Radcliffe's school of romantic fiction. She wrote *Northanger Abbey* expressly to expose and ridicule it; her heroine, Catherine Morland, is so taken up by her favourite *Mysteries of Udolpho*, that she talks quite learnedly about the South of France, for she has been there with Emily and Valancourt; and the very words "castle" or "abbey" suggest to her ideas of faded manuscripts and mysterious chains of horror. Isabella Thorpe promises Catherine plenty more of Mrs. Radcliffe's delightful romances.

"'But are you sure they are all horrid?' anxiously asks Catherine.

"'Yes, quite sure, for a particular friend of mine, Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them. I wish you knew Miss Andrews; you would be delighted with her. She is netting herself the sweetest cloak you can conceive.'"

This jumble about Mrs. Radcliffe's romances and the "sweetest cloak you can conceive" is one of those sly master-touches by which Miss Austen hits off the supreme silliness of her fools, who were then as much engrossed with the fortunes of Adeline and Julia as young ladies of the present day are with Nancy and Joan.

About Mrs. Radcliffe herself little is known. She stole like a spirit into the history of literature, and like a spirit stole away—a mystery hangs over her almost as great as that of her own Udolpho. We know scarcely anything of her own personal history, of her feelings, or of the progress of her mind. She had no literary friends, nobody met her in society, she did not wish to be considered an authoress at all. Unlike Madame de Staël, who loved to shine resplendent in every drawing-room, to wave her white arms, and discourse elo-

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quently on every imaginable subject — unlike Harriet Martineau, who delighted in laying down the law as if she had indeed been a Deborah, sitting under a palm tree— unlike little Lady Morgan, who flourished her green fan as she joyously circulated amongst her guests—unlike the piquante beauty, Mrs. Inchbald, "something between a milk-maid and a lady," whose chair was surrounded by every man in the room, so that it was vain for any other woman to attempt to gain attention — unlike these, her sister authoresses, Mrs. Radcliffe kept herself carefully apart from the world, and the world's ways. It was reported that she was dead, that she had died mad from the effects of her powerful imagination, and an *Ode to Terror* was composed on the event by a clergyman, in 1810. She lived for thirteen years afterwards, but she never took the trouble to contradict the report.

Derbyshire, which she had only visited for a few days, was named as the place where she was confined from insanity, but she let the public talk on, and said nothing. Haddon Hall, the Duke of Rutland's seat, was said to be the place where she had acquired her taste for old castles: she had never even seen it; but she quietly remained passive, and wrote no angry letters to call the rumour-mongers to order. This much of her we do know, that her maiden name was Ward—Anne Ward—and that she was born on the 9th of July, 1764. Surely some midnight blast or some wild thunder-storm must have been sweeping over that London house when she first saw the light! Her parents, William and Anne Ward, were tradespeople, but her father boasted a descent from the De Witts of Holland, one of whom had come over in the reign of Charles I. to reclaim the Lincolnshire fens. The Wards had relations of a higher social grade than their own; amongst them was Mr. Bentley, of the firm of Wedgewood and Bentley; and shy little Anne visited at Chelsea and Turnham Green, and saw from a respectful distance such celebrities as Mrs. Piozzi, Mrs.

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Montagu, and Athenian Stuart. No one thought much about educating the backward timid little girl; she knew how to read and write and sew, and that was almost all. Naturally she had a sweet voice, and was able to sing simple songs with feeling and expression. Though short, she was well proportioned, with a lovely complexion, fine eyes and eyebrows, and a beautiful mouth. She was sufficiently attractive to conquer the heart of William Radcliffe, a graduate of Oxford; and at the age of twenty-three she became his wife. They were married at Bath, but soon removed to London, and the young student of law, Mr. Radcliffe, became editor and proprietor of a weekly paper, the *English Chronicle*. He was often obliged to be out on newspaper business during the long evenings, and did not return home till late at night. Mrs. Radcliffe had no children, and the thought occurred to her that she would write a story. Her husband, who suspected that there was something uncommon concealed behind that shy, reserved exterior, encouraged her in the idea, and so during the long solitary winter evenings, beside the blazing fire, her pile of manuscripts grew. From slight causes, strange events spring. The shape of a woman's face, the colour of her hair, has sometimes decided her destiny; an accident—a few circumstances, not at all remarkable in themselves, have altered the whole purpose and end of a life. If Mrs. Radcliffe had been the mother of a large family, or if her husband's business had brought him home early, it is very probable that no weird romances would have been given to the world. But now, as she sat alone, strange things darted before her mind's eye; she glanced round the dim, untenanted room, and, lo and behold! grim deeds of horror and darkness stared her in the face. She might have said that to her:—

"The world unknown
With all its shadowy shape was shown,
Ah! Fear, ah! frantic Fear!
I see, I see thee near."

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She wrote rapidly, hurried on by the interest of her story. Unlike her readers, she neither trembled nor grew pale as, one by one, the ghastly scenes grew under her pen. But her husband was not so brave. He found that some of her chapters were more than he could venture to read in the silence of night. Two years after her marriage her first romance appeared—*The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne.* The scene is laid in Scotland during the warlike times of the ancient barons. And in it all the faults of Mrs. Radcliffe's style appear in full force. Malcolm's castle, full of trap-doors and gloomy vaults, lands us in needless horrors. Allyn, groping his way in the dark, stumbles on broken armour, and clasps a dead man's hand. This is only *en passant*, and has no actual bearing on any part of the story. It was one of those characteristic touches in which Mrs. Radcliffe's soul delighted. Next came the *Sicilian Romance*, which was more successful. Along with picturesque landscapes, we are introduced to the ruins of the castle of Mazzini, to which Emilia, Julia, and their brother Ferdinand are brought; Ferdinand sees a light and a figure gliding through an arched door. He returns to the great old hall—a spacious and desolate apartment, whose lofty roof rose into arches, supported by pillars of black marble. He reached the arches and discovered beyond a kind of inner hall, which was closed at the further end by a pair of massive folding doors, heavily ornamented with carving. They were fastened by a lock and defied his utmost strength.

As he surveyed the place in silent wonder a sullen groan arose from beneath the spot where he stood. His blood ran cold at the sound, but silence returning and continuing unbroken, he attributed his alarm to the illusions of a fancy which terror had impregnated. He made another attempt to force the door, when a groan was repeated, more hollow and more dreadful than the first. At this moment all his courage forsook him, he quitted the door, and hastened to the staircase which he ascended almost breathless with terror.

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After Julia's escape from banditti and dungeons, from shipwreck on the Sicilian shore, and a wild flight to a cavern which leads to vaults where she finds her mother buried alive, she is at length happily married to the Duke of Luovo, and the castle of Mazzini, the witness of so many crimes, is left to solitude and ruin.

True to the traditions of our grandmothers, Mrs. Radcliffe always makes her heroines marry the husbands of their choice; and, indeed, after such a succession of disasters as they have gone through, some little pleasure seems due to them.

Mrs. Radcliffe's next book was the *Romance of the Forest*, which appeared in 1791. This is one of her greatest successes, and she was now tolerably well launched into the sea of literature. But, strange to say, she was ashamed of her own talents, and was ready to sink into the earth at the bare suspicion of any one taking her for an authoress, her chief ambition being to be thought a lady. This poor sort of vanity was found in Congreve; when Voltaire came to see him, he would talk of nothing but fashionable life, as if he wished to be considered a mere idler about town, a fine gentleman with nothing to do. "If he had been *only* a gentleman," replied Voltaire, "I would never have thought of coming to see him at all." Mrs. Radcliffe's dislike to be taken for an author sprang principally from shyness and reserve. If a sudden knock came to the door, she ran to hide her papers as if they had been stolen goods. Nowadays, women have no such dislike to celebrity: they seek it, they glory in it, they hunger for it; but the enchantress of Udolpho thrust it from her as if it had been poison. She need never have been afraid that any of her friends would suspect her of "taking them off," for she never studied her characters from life, oddities passed unsuspected by her; she drew solely from her imagination, not from what passed before her own experience.

In the *Romance of the Forest*—a French forest, by the way—we are introduced to La Motte and his wife, who are

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flying from their creditors ; they meet a lovely young girl, Adeline, who implores them to save her from a ruffianly-looking man, who threatens to put her into a convent. La Motte takes charge of her, and they all reach a forest, and take refuge in a ruined Gothic abbey, with "lofty battlements, half demolished, thickly enwreathed by ivy. The thistle shook its lonely head, the moss whistled to the wind." There were broken pillars, spiral staircases, and trap-doors, of course. According to the old saying, if a lover is to come, he will come down by the chimney, so, in spite of the solitude of the abbey, Adeline soon has no less than three strings to her bow—Louis la Motte, who wanders in to look for his parents, the Marquis de Montalt, the owner of the Abbey, and Theodore, one of his officers. Adeline prefers Theodore. La Motte betrays her to the Marquis, she is rescued by Theodore and escapes with him ; is again taken back to the abbey, again escapes, and by the help of Peter, one of those useful talkative old servants, who are as necessary as waiting-maids to an old comedy, she arrives at a village in Savoy, and is adopted by the family of La Luc, who turn out to be the father and sister of Theodore. After a good many more adventures, Adeline is proved to be the daughter of the late Marquis of Montalt, who was murdered in the abbey by his brother. All now fare well. The marquis dies, and Adeline and Theodore are made happy. But as soon as the forest is left the interest fades. There is a romance in the very word "forest"—the forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, Sherwood Forest with Robin Hood and Little John, the New Forest with its thousands of associations, and last, but not least, Windsor Forest, which was one of Mrs. Radcliffe's favourite haunts. "There was scarcely a tree of importance with the peculiar form of which she was not familiar, and the varieties of whose aspect in light and shade she could not picture in words." As she sat there on a fallen tree, she evolved the idea of her romance and of Adeline's wanderings.

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Mrs. Radcliffe sometimes writes powerfully and well, but sometimes she writes very badly. Her style is stiff and inflated; she is fond of fine words and involved sentences, and has a righteous detestation of calling a spade a spade. Her forte is description, she has a peculiar talent for drawing link after link of detail. She brings us into a suite of mysterious rooms, with high casements, a dagger eaten with rust on the floor, an old bedstead, a heap of lumber, and a dusty manuscript—each completes a chain of horrors.

The Mysteries of Udolpho was published three years after the *Romance of the Forest*, and is a great improvement on it. The interest is more sustained, while the adventures are even more thrilling and terrible. If Adeline was unfortunate, Emily St. Aubert is ten times more so; she lives with her parents on the pleasant banks of the Garonne at La Vallée; first her mother dies, and she and her father take a journey to Provence for his health; on their way they meet Valancourt, an attractive young wanderer. In these hurry-skurry railway days, such a pleasant, leisurely journey, where the travellers can watch the progress of the day first trembling on the tops of the highest cliffs, then touching them with splendid light, while their sides and the vale below were still wrapt in dewy mist, sounds inexpressibly soothing. Emily wishes to trip along the turf, so green and bright with dew. Valancourt's love, though unspoken, seems to surround her, when he parted from the St. Auberts at the door of the little inn, "following them with his eyes, he waved his hand. Emily returned the adieu, till the winding road shut her from his sight."

The St. Auberts arrive at a vintage *fête* near the Marquis of Villeroi; mysterious music is heard, it is the warning of St. Aubert's end, and he dies, leaving Emily to return alone to La Vallée. She finds a secret spring, and burns some papers, according to his wish, without reading them. Her aunt, Madame Chéron, now appears on the scene; she first permits, then forbids, Emily's marriage with Valancourt, and

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ends by presenting Emily with a new uncle in the person of Signor Montoni, an Italian, the villain of the story. Emily is now brought off to Italy.

Mrs. Radcliffe's description of Venice, which she had never seen, is a very striking one. "Nothing," she says, "could exceed Emily's admiration on the first view of Venice, with its islets, palaces, and towns rising out of the sea, whose clear surface reflected the tremendous picture in all its colours. The sun sinking in the west tinted the waves and the lofty mountains of Friuli, which skirt the southern shores of the Adriatic, with a saffron glow; while on the marble porticoes and colonnades of St. Mark's were thrown the rich lights and shades of evening. As they glided on, the grander features of the city appeared more distinctly, its terraces crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics, touched as they now were with the splendours of the setting sun, appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter rather than reared by mortal hands." It has been pointed out that this fine description may have suggested to Byron that verse in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, in which he says:—

> "I stood at Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,
> A prison and a palace on each hand;
> From out the waves I saw the structures rise,
> As at the *stroke of an enchanter's wand.*"

At Venice, Emily picks up a suitor, Count Morani; she refuses him; Montoni insists on her submission, when to her great relief, this terrible uncle-in-law is obliged to leave Venice, and to take refuge in his castle of Udolpho. They all arrive there towards the close of the day. Mountains whose "shaggy steeps appear inaccessible" surround it; the deep tone of the portal-bell sounds, and as Emily looks through the twilight at the "lofty walls overtopt with briony-rose and nightshade, long-suffering and murder come into her thoughts." Her forebodings are fulfilled. There is

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a picture in one of the rooms, veiled with black silk ; she draws the veil, and falls senseless to the ground. A track of blood leads up the steep steps of the turret ; a dead body is seen ; she hears her aunt's hollow voice speaking in dying accents from the turret chamber, while groans, mysterious voices, and mysterious music sound on every side. Montoni's evil banquets, his conspirators, his plots against Emily's innocence, follow one after the other. At last she escapes from Udolpho with a French prisoner, Du Pont. He and Emily are shipwrecked in the Mediterranean amidst a thunder-storm ; they are rescued by the family of Villeroi, who live in the château near which St. Aubert died. After a hundred complications, Emily and Valancourt are finally made happy. The Countess Laurentini, supposed to have been murdered by Montoni, in order to get possession of Udolpho, turns up in a convent ; and all the horrors, summoned like phantoms from their prison-houses, fade back there again.

Mrs. Radcliffe had an unfortunate fancy for explaining away her horrors at the end of her books, which always spoils their effect ; she ought to have left them alone, not put them down to some natural cause.

For the *Mysteries of Udolpho* she got £500, and for *The Italian*, her next book, £800. She spent three years over *The Italian ;* and the opening scene is compared, by Sir Walter Scott, to the vaulted gateway of an ancient castle.

Some English travellers, visiting a Neapolitan church, are struck with the singular figure of a man passing through the pillars of the portico with folded arms and downcast looks. Startled by the sound of steps, he enters the church and vanishes. His tall, thin figure, somewhat bent, his sallow face and his fierce look impress the strangers. They learn from a friar that he is an assassin who has taken sanctuary, and he is seen entering a confessional. Then begin the loves of Elena Rosabella and Vincenzo

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di Vivaldi, which are opposed by the Marchioness of Vivaldi and her confessor, Father Schedoni, whose livid paleness, and large, melancholy eyes shaded by his cowl, are described in Mrs. Radcliffe's best manner. Elena is tracked by Vivaldi to the convent in which she has been placed. Agents of the Inquisition arrest the lovers. Schedoni makes the Marchioness condemn the innocent Elena to death. He is to do the deed ; but when he enters the room and sees her asleep, a portrait round her neck reveals who she is. In the haughty countenance of a dark cavalier, he recognizes himself ; he was once the Count of Bruno, and the sleeping girl is his daughter. It is not till after a hundred adventures that Schedoni expires with a fearful yell of triumph, and Elena and Vivaldi are peacefully married.

After *The Italian*, Mrs. Radcliffe wrote little. Through the death of relations, she and her husband came in for a good deal of money, so she had not now the spur of poverty to prompt her pen. She loved travelling, and the pleasure of seeing new sights. She only went through part of the Continent, Holland and the Rhine, but she visited nearly all the remarkable places in her own England, and faithfully kept a journal to tell of what she saw. There are two classes of minds—the subjective and the objective ; people of the subjective class cannot see any new place without mingling it up with some feeling or passing impression of their own : fields and woods, and sea and shore, seem to them a "wedding garment or a shroud," just as they happen to be in the humour at the time. The objective minds, on the other hand, look at things passively, and take them in without any colouring from their own fleeting fancies ; they merely receive, they do not impregnate everything with their own individual selves. Few women can do this ; they are too full of their own joys and sorrows simply to take in a new place, just as it is, without any reference to their personal feelings. But Mrs. Radcliffe was able to do so. In her journal we are only told of what she saw, never anything

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about the person who saw the things described. Sir Walter Scott said that nature had given her "the eye of a painter and the spirit of a poet." Something of this is shown in her description of Rochester Castle, with its square, ghastly walls and their hollow eyes, rising over a bank of the Medway, grey, and massive, and floorless, nothing remaining but a shell. Warwick Castle roused all the enthusiasm of her nature for gloom and mystery.

"What struck me most," she says, "was near the end of the gallery (where it makes a sudden turn into the tower that terminates the castle) there appeared before me a broad, yet dark staircase of oak, and at the foot of it, as if guarding the passage, a large figure in complete armour, the beaver down, and a sword in its hand. The general twilight, with the last western glance breaking through the painted window at the foot of the staircase, and touching the bronze, gave full effect to this scene, and heightened the obscurity of the stairs in prospective. This armour came from Germany, our conductor knew no more. Saw the brass coat, shot-proof, worn by Lord Brook, when he was shot in the eye during his attack upon Lichfield Cathedral. On the opposite side, a complete suit of black armour, the knees with projecting points; could learn nothing of its history; left the building with regret. Paused again in the court to admire the beautiful, lofty acacias, and other noble trees surrounding the lawn and the most majestic towers from the grand front. The octagon tower rising in the angle of the walls near the house door, the most beautiful as far as regards proportion. The one nearest the houses, the most venerable and warlike. Near the summit is an embattled overhanging gallery, where formerly, no doubt, sentinels used to pace during the night; the country far and wide received the watchword from the sentinel perched in the little watch-tower, and repeated it to the soldiers on guard on the walls and gate below. Before those great gates and underneath those towers, Shakespeare's ghost might have stalked, they

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are in the very character and spirit of such an apparition, grand and wild and strange. Stayed before those grey towers till twilight."

Mrs. Radcliffe's mind was stronger than her body. She had long suffered from spasmodic asthma, then came inflammation of the brain, following inflammation of the lungs, which carried her off in her sleep on the morning of February 7th, 1823. She was in the fifty-ninth year of her age, and was buried in a vault of the chapel of ease at Bayswater, belonging to St. George's, Hanover Square. After her death, another romance of hers, *Gaston de Blondeville, a tale of Kenilworth*, was published along with some very remarkable poems, which now saw the light for the first time. She was fond of dabbling in verse, as some very indifferent odes and songs in the *Romance of the Forest* show. She seems to be trying to find a voice in song which would not come. But the ballad style brought out her real strength, and her ballads were only given to the public when she was cold in death. Women are much fonder of telling about states of feeling, than about battles and daring deeds, with which they generally have little sympathy. But Mrs. Radcliffe's mind was a remarkable one, and her last verses, with all their faults, have the genuine ring, the dash and the daring and the glow of the true ballad. Once she begins to describe, she is all right.

In verse as well as in prose, we see that Mrs. Radcliffe has the power of arousing terror, of building up in words a vision of some dim, mysterious, impending danger. This, in fact, was her peculiar dominion; she has had many imitators, but no one has ever come up to her. We may turn over book after book and meet with pathos, fun, satire, but Anne Radcliffe remains undisputed queen of the horrible.

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X.

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

1767–1849.

Richard Lovell Edgeworth—Early marriage—Birth of Maria—Edgeworthstown—*Simple Susan*—*Practical Education*—*Belinda*—*Castle Rackrent*—Visit to Paris—M. Edelcrantz—*Harrington and Ormond*—Death of Mr. Edgeworth—Travels—Happy family life—*Helen*—Old age and death.

ALL her life Maria Edgeworth was a hero-worshipper. Her hero was her father. Though he was pompous, arrogant, and egotistical, she never saw his faults; keenly alive to the weaknesses of others, she was utterly blind to his. "Ever since I could think or feel," she says in his memoirs, "he was the first object and motive of my mind." He, on his part, wrote of her as his dear pupil, literary partner, and friend. When such a close union as this existed, it would be impossible to say anything of Maria Edgeworth without also saying something of her father; whatever affected his thoughts and pursuits reacted afterwards on her, and the course of her life was shaped by his. He was the son of a gentleman of good property in the County Longford. Perhaps from his Welsh mother, who had been a Miss Lovell, he inherited a violent and passionate temper. Once in a childish rage he flung a box-iron at his elder brother. His mother instead of flogging him, reasoned with him; he was fond of reasoning, and from that day he set to work to

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control his temper, and succeeded. Owing to his brother's early death he became heir to the Edgeworth property. He threw himself into whatever he did with amazing eagerness; dancing and mechanics were his special delight. When he was an undergraduate at Oxford he married Miss Elers, whom he had met at her father's house at Black Bourton, near Oxford. Before he was twenty his eldest son was born, and the young father soon began to make experiments on the child's education. From the age of three the boy was brought up according to Rousseau's ideas, explained in the *Nouvelle Heloise*. No stockings were allowed, the child's arms were bare; he was to be made hardy, fearless of danger, and to resemble as closely as possible a savage brought up in a hut, with some knowledge of modern *things*, but none of books. As might be imagined, this plan did not turn out well.

Mrs. Edgeworth, though she was the daughter of a clever barrister and the future mother of an authoress, took no interest in her husband's theories. She was ignorant of everything but reading, spelling, and adding up pounds, shillings, and pence, and seems to have had no wish to learn. Her husband soon found her company dull and tedious, and began to regret his hasty marriage. He had, however, no difficulty in finding occupation. After settling down at Hare Hatch, in Berkshire, where, on the 1st of January, 1767, his daughter Maria was born, he spent his time in inventing mechanical contrivances and in visiting Sir Francis Delavel in London, at whose house he met various fashionable and scientific celebrities. Experiments with telegraphs, inventions of sailing carriages, turnip-cutters, wooden horses, one-wheeled phaetons, occupied his busy mind. Hearing that Dr. Darwin had invented a new carriage, he started off to Lichfield to inspect it. Through the Darwins he became acquainted with the Lichfield poetess, Miss Anna Seward, and her friend, Honora Sneyd, who was young, beautiful, and intelligent. At first Mr. Edgeworth thought that the charming Honora would answer for his eccentric friend,

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Mr. Day, afterwards author of *Sandford and Merton*, but when Honora refused this awkward plilosopher, Mr. Edgeworth began to fall in love with her himself. She shared his mechanical tastes, and all that interested him interested her. The contrast between her and his wife was too great. He felt that he ought not to see more of her, and that his only safety was in flight.

Accompanied by Mr. Day, he took his oddly dressed son and set off for France. At Lyons he entered on the giant work of turning the Rhone out of its usual channel, and erected a number of engineering works. He had been busily employed for some time when the news came of the birth of his second daughter, Anna, and the death of his wife, who had left France after a short stay. There was no doubt about her successor. Mr. Edgeworth lost no time in going to Lichfield, and was married there to Honora Sneyd. Symptoms of consumption soon showed themselves, and after six years of happiness his second wife and the love of his life, breathed her last. On her death-bed, she strongly advised him to marry her sister Elizabeth. At first he hesitated, as well he might, but his opinion of Honora's judgment and the power of Elizabeth's charms finally prevailed. There was some difficulty about a marriage with a deceased wife's sister. One clergyman in Cheshire refused to perform the ceremony, but at last Mr. Edgeworth was married to Elizabeth Sneyd at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

With wife No. 3 and a family of seven children he now resolved to return to Ireland. He had spent three years at Edgeworthstown with his second wife, but had found England far more attractive. Now, he thought that wherever his property was situated he ought to live and benefit it as much as possible.

Maria had been at school at Derby. Though she was hopelessly dull about music, she was sharp enough about everything else. She says herself that she was twelve years old, but by comparing dates we find that she must have

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MARIA EDGEWORTH AND HER FATHER.

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been fifteen, when the strangely-constituted Edgeworth family arrived at their Irish home. Wherever they turned, in or out of the house, they saw nothing but damp, dilapidation and waste. Painting, glazing, roofing, all were wanting. The back yard, and even the front lawn, round the windows of the house, were filled with "loungers, followers, and petitioners, tenants, under-tenants, drivers, sub-agents, and agents." All had grievances and secret information and quarrels. Then came widows and orphans with heartrending tales of distress. Little Maria was amused and interested as she looked on, and listened to her father making his way through all these grievances and complaints.

He was all the time in excellent good-humour with the people, and they were delighted with him. He often "rated them soundly when they stood before him, helpless in procrastination, detected in cunning, or convicted of falsehood," but they did not mind a scolding. The first remark which was whispered about, with looks of congratulation, was, "His honour is good pay, any way," and the summit of praise soon followed, "His honour is a real gentleman."

These first glimpses which Maria Edgeworth had of Irish character, as it was a century ago, were afterwards turned to good account in *The Absentee* and *Ennui*. In both these tales an Irish landlord returns to his estates after years of absence. Just as Maria's powers of observation were coming into play, it was no wonder that she was struck with the oddities of the Irish lower classes; they made a greater impression on her than if she had been accustomed to them from her birth. Improvements of all kinds now began. The house at Edgeworthstown was inconvenient, with small gloomy rooms, dark wainscots, heavy cornices, little windows, corner chimneys, and a staircase that took up half the house. Mr. Edgeworth prudently set to work by degrees, added and altered year by year, and succeeded in making a large comfortable house. Fencing, draining, levelling, planting, making a garden, all went on briskly. Longford is

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one of the least beautiful parts of Ireland: here are no lofty mountains, no wooded glens, no rushing rivers; dull plains, dreary bogs, uninteresting roads, are all that meet the eye. It was not a "meet nurse for a poetic child," and yet it was in "the school of Edgeworthstown," says Lockhart, "that Oliver Goldsmith received part of his education; and Pallasmore, where the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield* first saw the light, is still, as it was in his time, the property of the Edgeworths."

Maria was, however, always more attracted by human nature than by inanimate nature, and, without leaving the roof of Edgeworthstown, she had every variety of character and disposition under her eyes. Mr. Edgeworth was in the position of the man who is declared by the Psalmist to be supremely blessed; his quiver was full of arrows—in other words, his house was full of children. From first to last not less than eighteen sons and daughters were brought up in his house, and after the age of three or four none of these were banished to the nursery or schoolroom; they took their places with the rest of the family, and were encouraged to think and speak on every subject. In this happy home every one fell into the right groove; no one interfered or quarrelled with the other. Two Miss Sneyds, sisters of Mrs. Edgeworth, arrived from England, but instead of disturbing the harmony of things they only added to it. One little boy, who died young, was handed over to Maria's care; another sister, Emmeline, took charge of a little girl; and Honora, the only daughter of the "sainted second," was given up to one of her aunts. This little maiden was a perfect prodigy, too clever to live; she wrote a poetical tale before she was thirteen, and understood all about cubes and triangles as soon as she could speak.

Mr. Edgeworth was the life and soul of the house. He taught his boys Latin, drew out the minds of all his children, told them his concerns, and did the business of his estate in the common sitting-room. Maria was his secretary, and

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helped him to copy his letters and receive his rents. It was no wonder that her thoughts should be turned on education. It was her father's ruling hobby; her stepmother had taken it up, and Edgeworthstown might have been called Education Hall. A book was kept in which all the curious sayings of the children were written down. One child asked why she was as tall as the trees when she was far from them; another found out the reason of the winds blowing; and little Honora proposed a new way of extinguishing candles. Accordingly, Maria's first experiment in writing was to translate Madame de Genlis's *Adèle et Théodore; ou, Lettres sur l'Education.* Mr. Edgeworth sat up half the night correcting it, and everything promised well, when another translation appeared. But the trouble was not thrown away. The little translator was almost a child, shy and diffident of her powers. Her father wished to rouse her to exertion by example as well as precept. This was done; and now he made her promise never to begin anything that she did not finish, which promise she faithfully kept. The sympathy, the interest taken in her progress made her grateful, and urged her to go on.

Mr. Day was shocked and alarmed that Mr. Edgeworth should have allowed his daughter even to translate. He agreed with Sir Anthony Absolute that a woman's learning should consist in knowing her simple letters, without their "mischievous combinations," and constantly repeated the lines—

> "For wit, like wine, intoxicates the brain,
> Too strong for feeble woman to sustain.
> Of those that claim it more than half have none,
> And half of those who have it are undone."

But Mr. Edgeworth was quite determined not only to let his daughter go on writing, but to encourage her as much as possible. She now began some of those tales in the *Parents' Assistant* which have helped to make her name famous. Wherever the English language is read *Simple Susan* and

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Lazy Lawrence have found their way. Children of all sects and classes delight in these stories. They have an irresistible charm, and truth, honesty, and uprightness were never made half so attractive. Books for children were then uncommon, and these supplied a gap in literature which no one had been able to fill. Whenever Maria thought of writing anything she always told her father the first rough plans. He immediately fixed upon the best, and said, "Sketch that, and show it to me." It was sketched accordingly; but if she dwelt too long on a particular part he said, "I don't want any of your painting, none of your drapery. I can imagine all that. Let me see the bare skeleton." Sometimes she thought he could not make out her rough sketches, and he said, "Now my dear little daughter, I know, does not believe that I understand her," and so he filled up the sketch in his own words. Now came her part. She wrote on and on to her heart's content till she heard the words "Go on and FINISH." After this she was told not to correct. "Leave that to me," said her kind critic; "it is my business to cut and correct, yours to write on." What the value of such criticism was—the judgment of one who knew how to cut—can hardly be told. Some say now that Maria Edgeworth would have done much better if she had been left to herself, without her father's perpetual criticism, but this seems more than doubtful. She had little confidence in herself, and he gave her confidence: she wanted some one on whom her judgment could rely, and he supplied the want. She wrote on freely, knowing that he would find out anything that was incorrect or superfluous, and so confidence came. Without it a writer is on crutches. With it he is able to walk and soon to run. Even geniuses benefit by guidance. Just as George Eliot had Mr. Lewes, so Maria Edgeworth had her father. When the stories were finished they were read out to the whole household in the evenings, and all the children pronounced upon them and decided whether they were good or not.

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In 1792 a visit of two years to Clifton did much to enlarge Maria's sphere of observation. She saw something of the world and of different varieties of life. Traces of this visit may be seen in *Lazy Lawrence* and *Waste Not, Want Not.* The first partnership work, *Practical Education*, was brought out by the father and daughter in 1798. Some of the chapters might be read with advantage at the present day. One on "Truth" is especially good, and the anecdotes of the Edgeworth children give interesting peeps into the inner life of the family. One of the boys went up to his father and said, "Father, I have broken the best looking-glass in your house," and the answer was that his father would rather all the glasses in his house were broken than that the child should attempt to make an excuse. Truth in the strictest sense, in the smallest things, was the ruling principle of the household, and was zealously brought out in Maria Edgeworth's writings.

The year 1798 was a memorable one. The third Mrs. Edgeworth had fallen a victim to consumption, and the disconsolate widower soon thought of marrying again. His fourth choice was Miss Beaufort. She had designed some sketches for the *Parents' Assistant.* He had found fault with them, and she had borne his criticisms so good-humouredly, that he formed his own opinion as to her character. Miss Beaufort was some years younger than Maria Edgeworth, who was now thirty-one. It is always a trial for a grown-up daughter when her father marries again. Maria objected strongly, but her father's influence was all-powerful; he told her that no one had ever seen into the heart of another as she had done into his; such confidence was irresistible, she gave in, and the marriage turned out happily for all parties—the two Miss Sneyds living on at Edgeworthstown as before. But a time of political trouble now loomed darkly around. In August the French landed at Killala Bay, and news came that they were advancing faster and faster. Every minute the shout of the

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rebels was expected, and the Edgeworth family had to leave their home and drive off in hot haste to take refuge in the town of Longford. Only an English housekeeper was left behind. When the rebels came to the gate, one of them remembered that this woman had lent his wife sixteen shillings, the rent of a flax-ground. He was now resolved to stand her friend, and would not let the house be attacked. When the alarm was over, and the French were defeated at Ballynamuck, the family returned, and found "not a twig touched, not a leaf harmed." A map was still open on the library table, pencils and slips of paper with arithmetical lessons were lying about, and a pansy, which one of the children had been copying, was left untouched on the chimneypiece. But the panic was so great that shortly afterwards, the Edgeworths went again for some time to Clifton. One of the daughters, Anna, had married a Clifton doctor, Dr. Beddoes, and they found many friends whom they knew and liked.

Maria's pen now became busier than ever. About 1800, her first and most original Irish story, *Castle Rackrent*, was published. It is supposed to be related by Thady Quirk, an old servant of the Rackrent family. The failings of drunken Sir Patrick, litigious Sir Murtagh, fighting Sir Kit, and slovenly Sir Condy, are told with a broad humour which shows how accurately Miss Edgeworth knew the character of an old Irish retainer devoted to the "family" through evil and good report. The barrack-room of Castle Rackrent, the windows stopped with slates, the dusty window-seat which old Thady wipes with his wig, the great approach blocked by the fallen piers of the gate, are not overdrawn pictures. Even the account of Sir Kit's Jewish wife, whom he locked up for seven years, and was killed himself in a duel fighting about her probable successor, had its match in the real story of Lady Cathcart, who was locked up by her husband in her own house for twenty years. *Castle Rackrent* was the parent of the large family of Irish novels.

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Jeffery says that when Miss Edgeworth began to write, the manners of Ireland were less known than those of Otaheite, and now the reckless fun, the improvidence, and the wasteful riot opened out a new and untrodden field. Yet Maria Edgeworth's next novel, *Belinda*, was not an Irish one. She here followed the style of Miss Burney. Belinda, beautiful, accomplished, and prudent, is sent by her match-making aunt to stay with Lady Delacour, a dashing woman of fashion, in London. Whenever Miss Edgeworth has an oddity or a *bel-ésprit* on hand she is quite at home, and Lady Delacour, sometimes depressed, sometimes brilliant, sometimes witty and sarcastic, is one of her best characters. We hear complaints that the present is a "fast age," but what would now be thought of one of Lady Delacour's exploits? She goes to fight a duel with her enemy, Mrs. Luttridge, at six o'clock in the morning; principals and seconds are dressed in men's clothes, and just as the shots are fired the amazons are in danger of being ducked in a horsepond by an angry mob. A diversion is fortunately made by the hero, Clarence Hervey, who comes on the scene driving a herd of pigs for a wager. He rattles a bladder full of beans, and close behind him comes a French officer driving a flock of turkeys, and flourishing a red streamer. The mob now shout "England for ever!" but through Mr. Hervey's politeness he loses his wager of a hundred guineas, and the turkeys arrive at the market-cross before the pigs! Startling incidents abound in *Belinda*. We have an anonymous letter, a secret marriage, and a wealthy father turning up just at the right time. The growth of Lady Delacour's jealousy is most dramatically described; but Belinda herself is too faultless. Even Miss Edgeworth calls her an uninteresting personage. The idea of Clarence Hervey bringing up Virginia St. Pierre as his wife, and then not knowing what to do with her, was suggested by Mr. Day's educating a foundling, Sabrina Sidney, expressly according to his own matrimonial fancies, but this "patch of truth" Miss Edgeworth thought did not fit well into her story.

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Belinda was a great success. Mr. Edgeworth's knowledge of London life, of the follies of fashion, and the tricks of gamblers and Jews, made his daughter's book quite unlike the ordinary run of ladies' novels. Together they now wrote the *Essay on Bulls and Blunders*, published, Miss Edgeworth says, in 1803. Sometimes Mr. Edgeworth suggested the ideas, and his daughter worked them out; sometimes she wrote her first thoughts, and they were corrected and revised by him. The essay contains a great deal of curious information and out-of-the-way reading. Amusing touches of original Irish wit are given in abundance, and the Essay is the best authority which exists on the subject. Bulls are shown to be a laughable confusion of ideas, resulting, it might be added, in a contradiction of words. From the celebrated "This coffee-house removed upstairs," to "Every man his own washerwoman," we are flooded with examples to show that bulls are not specially Irish, but have been perpetrated by all blunderers in every quarter of the globe.

Maria was now fairly launched in the sea of literature, and her father had reason to be justly proud of his pupil. "His praise," she says, "was so delightful, it was so warmly, so fondly given." It seemed to be her best reward. In figure she was extremely small, with irregular features and light-blue eyes; she was very neat, and so brisk and restless that those who have seen her say that she looked as if she were on wires. Her laughter and tears came like light on quicksilver. "Maria's tears," says Lockhart, "are always ready when any generous string is touched."

In the autumn of 1802, Mr. Edgeworth took his wife, Maria, and her half-sister, Charlotte, to Paris, where they made acquaintance with Madame de Genlis, Kosciusko, Comte and Comtesse Segur, and a host of other celebrities. At Paris the only love-episode of Maria's practical life occurred. "Here, my dear aunt," she writes, "I was interrupted in a manner that will surprise you as much as it

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surprised me, by the coming in of Monsieur Edelcrantz, a Swedish gentleman, whom we have mentioned to you, of superior understanding and mild manners ; he came to offer me his hand and heart! My heart cannot return his attachment. I think nothing would ever tempt me to leave my own dear friends and country to live in Sweden." To her cousin (December 8, 1802) she wrote, "I have never felt anything for him but esteem and gratitude." But Mr. Edgeworth says, "Maria was much mistaken as to her own feelings. She refused M. Edelcrantz, but she felt more for him than esteem and admiration. She was extremely in love with him while we were at Paris. I remember that in a shop where Charlotte and I were making some purchases, Maria sat apart absorbed in thought, and so deep in reverie that when her father came in and stood opposite to her she did not see him till he spoke to her, when she started and burst into tears. Her idea was that she could not make M. Edelcrantz happy, that her want of personal beauty would prevent her being a credit to him, and that her duty lay with her own family. He was very much mortified by her refusal, and never married."

After a visit to Edinburgh the Edgeworths returned to their Longford home. Maria always says "we" and "us," never "me" or "I." The happy life at Edgeworthstown now began again. *Moral Tales* were quickly succeeded by *Popular Tales*. These are emphatically stories with a purpose—virtue is always rewarded, and craft and roguery are sure to defeat their own ends;—this can hardly fail to produce a tone of sameness ; but the stories, as far as they go, are admirable of their kind.

Volume after volume of *Tales from Fashionable Life* was poured forth in rapid succession. In *The Absentee* the follies of pretensions are ridiculed. Lady Clonbrony courting the great in London drawing-rooms, lavishing thousands on her "galas," and vainly trying to appear English, is shown to be just as absurd as Mrs. Rafferty, the grocer's wife,

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when she is entertaining Lord Colambre, and bursts out in the middle of dinner with "Corny Dempsey, Corny Dempsey, you're no more gud at the fut of my table than a stick of celery." As usual, the heroine, Grace Nugent, is too insipidly excellent, and far less lifelike than Larry Brady, the postboy. Lord Macaulay considered *The Absentee* Miss Edgeworth's best novel, but *Ennui* is almost as good. In *Ennui* the listless Earl of Glenthorn, when he finds that he is only plain Mr. O'Donohue, shows that he can be an active, useful member of society, and thus illustrates the favourite Edgeworth maxim that at every age improvement is possible. *Ennui* abounds in amusing pictures of Irish scenes, and Joe Kelly's idea that it is better to lie in jail for a murder than a robbery, is an apt instance of the peculiarity of Hibernian morals. *Almeria* is another success; we can hardly pity the fickle heiress of two hundred thousand pounds when she finds herself slighted by her fashionable friends, including the court favourite, Lady Pierrepoint, who married merely to "increase her consequence and strengthen her connections." *Patronage* is the longest and dullest of Miss Edgeworth's novels. She leaves Irish ground, where she is most at home, and though the lesson that it is better to depend on one's own exertions than to court the great; is no doubt excellent, still the plot is tiresome, and there are too many characters. The only good scene is where Georgiana Falconer sells her cast-off dresses to her lady's-maid.

Patronage shows Miss Edgeworth at her worst, but her fame was too strongly established to be shaken. When the Edgeworth family paid a visit to London in 1813 they were *fêted* and lionised wherever they went. Lord Byron mentions in his *Diary* having met them. He himself had been the lion of the preceding year. Miss Edgeworth and Madame de Staël succeeded him. "I thought Edgeworth," he says, "a fine old fellow of a clarety elderly red complexion, but active, brisk, and endless. He bounced about and talked loud and long." He was then seventy, but did

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not look fifty. A paper had been just sent round for the recall of Mrs. Siddons to the stage, and Moore proposed that another paper should be signed "for the recall of Mr. Edgeworth to Ireland." "The fact was," says Byron, "every one cared more about her. She is a nice little unassuming Jeanie Deans looking body, as we Scotch say; and if not handsome, certainly not ill-looking. Her conversation was as quiet as herself. One would never have guessed she could write her name."

After this visit, unconscious Mr. Edgeworth wrote to Mrs. Barbauld, "*We* certainly got a most flattering reception in London, but it has not tempted us to renew the experiment." Modest Maria begged Mrs. Barbauld not to suspect her of being so weak, so vain, so senseless as to have her brain turned by a little fashionable flattery. Her home at Edgeworthstown was always acceptable. "I wish," she writes to Mrs. Barbauld, "that I could transport you into this large cheerful family, where everybody, from little Pakenham of four years old to the old housekeeper, would do everything in their power to make you at home." Another time she speaks of her stepmother as being in "useful blooming health, and the darling little Francis is now crowing and dancing at her window, looking out at his sisters, who are making hay. He has a natural genius for happiness, as Sydney Smith would say, great hereditary constitutional joy."

Miss Edgeworth was always ready to read and admire other people's books. In one of her letters she spoke of Mrs. Inchbald's *Simple Story*, and said it made her feel still more her own deficiencies. *Harrington* and *Ormond* were her next tales. Harry Ormond is a high-spirited young Irishman, who, unlike a former hero, Vivien, learns to say "No!" King Corny, of the Black Islands, the good-hearted, dictatorial, hard-drinking squire, is a capital contrast to Black Connell and Miss O'Faley, with their French airs and graces. *Ormond* is an Irish-French tale, and ranks with Miss Edgeworth's very best.

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One of the last things which Mr. Edgeworth did was to write a preface to *Ormond*. He died in 1817, to the intense grief of his family. Maria seemed literally crushed by his loss. After weary days of pain he heard every evening what she had written in the morning, and went on correcting with a perseverance which she could not bear to think of. "Maria's tales," he wrote, "have cheered the lingering hours of my illness." She now had to write alone. Her first work was to edit her father's autobiography, and to write the concluding volume, which was to her a painful task. She then took a holiday, and, accompanied by her two step-sisters, travelled about from place to place. Moore mentions meeting them in 1818 at Bowood, the Marquis of Lansdowne's. "Miss Edgeworth," he says, "delightful, not from display, but from repose and unaffectedness, the least pretending person of the company." Paris—Switzerland—Geneva—London again—breakfasts at Rogers'—balls at Almack's—made a strange contrast to the quiet home at Edgeworthstown.

One of the events of Miss Edgeworth's life was a visit to Abbotsford in 1823. Sir Walter Scott always said that her Irish tales had suggested his Scotch novels, and her *naïveté* and good-humoured energy delighted him. Her visit was a series of *fêtes*. "One day," says Lockhart, "there was fishing in the Cauldshiels Loch, and a dinner on the heathy bank; another, the whole party feasted by Thomas the Rhymer's waterfall in the glen, and the stone on which Maria sat that day was afterwards called Edgeworthstone. A third day we had to go further afield. Sir Walter must needs show her, not Newark only, but all the upper scenery of the Yarrow, where 'fair hangs the apple frae the rock.' The baskets were unpacked about sunset beside the ruined chapel overlooking St. Mary's Loch. He had scrambled to gather bluebells and heath flowers, with which the young ladies must twine their hair, and they sang and he recited until it was time to go home beneath the softest of harvest

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moons. Thus a fortnight passed, and her vision closed." The visit was soon returned. Mr. Lovell Edgeworth threw open his doors to the Wizard of the North, and Maria, with her brother and sister, accompanied him to Killarney. What with her old friends and his new ones the journey resembled a triumphal progress.

Miss Edgeworth generally sat down to her writing-desk (a plain wooden one, made by her father) in the common sitting-room, soon after breakfast, and wrote till luncheon, her chief meal, then did some needle-work, took a short drive, and wrote for the rest of the afternoon. During her later days, she gives the following peep of her happy family life. "So you like to hear of all our little doings," she says. "About eight o'clock, Fanny being by that time up, and dressed, and at her little table; Harriet comes and reads to me Madame de Sevigné's *Letters*, of which I never tire. After breakfast, I take my little table into Lucy's room and write there for an hour. She is generally reading at that hour, or doing algebra. I am writing a sequel to *Frank*. Walking, reading, and talking fill the rest of the day."

Helen is Miss Edgeworth's last novel. Like all her books, it has a lesson, and the lesson is the immense importance of truth in little things. It shows how one inaccuracy may lead on to another, till by degrees the "little black spot" spreads. Lady Cecilia Clarendon, lovely and winning, is yet not perfectly truthful. In order to conceal a flirtation which she has had before her marriage from her husband she persuades her friend Helen to take the blame of some love-letters. Helen hesitates, but Cecilia weeps and implores, till at last she gained her point. From that hour Helen is made miserable. She is unjustly accused, and, unable to defend herself, the letters are published, and she is pointed out as the writer. At length, just as things have come to agony pitch, and Helen is separated from Granville Beauclerc, Cecilia confesses the truth. The interest of the story is kept up to the last, and though it was published in

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1834, Miss Edgeworth's powers seem as fresh as ever. She is sometimes accused of being too common-sensical, not sufficiently romantic and passionate. If this be a fault, she must certainly plead guilty to it. Self-restraint, truth in all things, were the moving principles of her soul. She has been classed with Jane Austen, but no two writers can be less alike. Miss Austen never wrote with a moral purpose, Miss Edgeworth never wrote without one, and her stories are generally made to fit the lessons she wishes to bring out. Miss Austen excels with common-place people, Miss Edgeworth utterly fails with them, but her Irish servants, her wits, and fops, are admiraole. Miss Austen has a fine, delicate humour, while her sister authoress deals in broad, racy drollery, in dramatic scenes which are often extravagant and laughable. Miss Austen never seems to think about her plots, Miss Edgeworth takes pains to make hers as ingenious and complicated as possible. Miss Austen was the greater artist, but Miss Edgeworth was a much more useful and practical writer. The fame of Jane Austen rests on six novels, while Maria Edgeworth published forty-seven volumes, dealing with a variety of subjects, and showing an immense amount of reading and observation. She was emphatically the children's friend. As time goes on, even *The Absentee* may rest on the dusty shelves of our libraries, but *Harry and Lucy*[1] and *Simple Susan* will be thumbed in nurseries and schoolrooms as long as the world lasts. Maria Edgeworth died in her happy home at Edgeworthstown, surrounded by her brothers and sisters on the 21st of May, 1849. She lived to be over eighty-two, having survived her dearly-loved father thirty-two years.

[1] Maria Edgeworth's youngest step-sister, the "Lucy" of *Harry and Lucy*, is now the widow of Dr. Robinson, of Armagh, late Astronomer Royal, and is still living (1892). Though almost ninety, she is bright and animated, and can well remember her sister Maria. I had the pleasure of meeting her at Cambridge, where she lives with her relatives, Sir George and Lady Stokes. Age has not quite withered the marvellous vitality and intelligence which she shares with the whole Edgeworth family.—C. J. H.

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XI.

AMELIA OPIE.

1769–1853.

Birth at Norwich—The assizes—Marriage with Mr. Opie—*Father and Daughter*—*Adeline Mowbray*—Death of Mr. Opie—London amusements—A whirlpool of gay life—Intimacy with the Gurneys—Becomes a Quakeress—Buoyant to the last—Death.

SOME women never seem to grow old. Even to the very last they are fresh, gay, and joyous, dowered with a gift of perpetual youth. So it was with Amelia Opie. She gives us, in a little scrap of autobiography, a glimpse of her first feelings as a child, and what they were then they always remained. The rust of age could not corrode them ; noonday, hot and dusty, could not parch or dry them up. "One of my earliest recollections," she writes, "is of gazing on the bright and blue sky as I lay in my little bed before the hour of rising came, and listening with delighted attention to the ringing of a peal of bells. I had heard that heaven was beyond those blue skies, and I had been taught that *there* was the home of the good, and I fancied that those sweet bells were ringing in heaven."

It was not in the seclusion of a quiet country village, but in the busy manufacturing town of Norwich—the birthplace also of practical, clear-headed Harriet Martineau—that little Amelia Alderson breathed in these pleasant first impressions.

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She was the only child of a kind-hearted, benevolent surgeon, and was born in 1769. As her mother died young, she found herself, at the age of fifteen, the head of her father's house. His love for her knew no bounds, and the day on which she was born was, he said, the happiest in his life. He left her free to follow her own tastes; she was a spoiled child, not obliged to learn, therefore she learned little or nothing, and not obliged to attend any religious worship, except the Unitarian chapel once on a Sunday. She grew up free from prejudice, full of enthusiasm for the unfortunate, full of love for romance and adventure. Robin Hood was her favourite hero; and at sixteen, when driving through Sherwood Forest, she insisted on getting out to walk through it, and tread where he and his merry men had trodden.

But assize time at Norwich was her pet excitement. It was *the* great event of the year. The day when the judges came in she was always taken to watch the procession pass. The pages in their pretty dresses, who ran by the side of the high sheriff's carriage in which the judges sat, while the other coaches followed slowly and solemnly behind—all these sights Amelia's delighted eyes drank in. With awe and reverence did she gaze at the judges' wigs, at their scarlet robes, and the white wand of the sheriff.

As years went on, she longed to enter the assize court, and as soon as she found that ladies were allowed to attend trials and causes, she never rested till she obtained leave to enjoy this treat. Accordingly, some one agreed to take her, and she set off for the Nisi Prius Court. By some lucky chance, she found herself on the bench by the side of the judge, who regarded her fixed attention with some complacency.

"He was so kind," says Mrs. Opie, "as to enter into conversation with me. Never, I think, had my vanity been so gratified, and when on being forced to leave the court by the arrival of my dinner hour, he said he hoped I was

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AMELIE OPIE.

BORN NOVEMBER 12TH, 1769; DIED DECEMBER 2ND, 1853.

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sufficiently pleased to come again. I went home much pleased in my own estimation, and fully resolved to go into court the next day. As I was obliged to go alone, I took care to wear the same dress as I wore on the preceding day, in hopes that if the judge saw me, he would cause way to be made for me. But being obliged to go in at a door where the crowd was very great, I had little hopes of being seen. At last I was pushed forward by the crowd, and gradually got nearer the table. While thus struggling with obstacles, a man, not quite in the grade of a gentleman, pushed me back rather rudely, and said, 'There, miss, go home. You had better go away; what business have you here? This is no place for you. Be advised; there, go, I tell you!'"

But "Miss" had no idea of going, and held her ground persistently till Judge Gould, catching sight of her, ordered one of the officers of the court to make room for that young lady. As she took her place by the judge's side she admits that she could not resist casting a triumphant glance on her impertinent reprover, and "had the satisfaction of seeing that he looked rather foolish." One of the witnesses in this usury case was convicted of perjury, and left the court a ruined man; he was found dead in his bed next morning, and his grave was dug in the churchyard which faced Dr. Alderson's windows.

These scenes in the assize court had, no doubt, a marked effect on Amelia Alderson's mind, and traces of them may afterwards be found in her books. She was a very unliterary young lady, and drew none of her inspirations from books. She began to write before she had read or studied anything, a few scraps of music and French constituted her education. Her acquaintance with history and biography seems a blank, and yet she was so gay, so fresh, so willing to please and to be pleased, that her father and her friends never asked for anything more. They fell into raptures about her "countenance, animated, bright and beaming; her eyes soft and

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expressive, yet full of ardour; her auburn hair, abundant and beautiful, waving in long tresses; her well-formed figure, her fine carriage, her well-shaped hands, arms, and feet; while all around and about her was the spirit of youth, and joy, and love."

Her ballad-singing also had a great charm, the same charm of simple, tender pathos which we find in her books. One of her first literary sins was, of course, a tragedy—called *Adelaide*. She wrote it at the age of eighteen, and it was performed privately amongst her friends, she herself taking the part of the heroine. During her visit to London her interest in the drama continued, and she wrote two or three farces, and made acquaintance with actors and actresses.

Writing from Englefield Green, in August, 1797, she says: "Shall we have some hot evening walks? I shall want them, by way of relaxation from my studies (do not laugh). Positively, I must set hard to work, as the theatre opens in September." Her plays never seem to have been performed in public, but she continued her acquaintance with theatrical people. In one of her letters to Mrs. John Taylor, of Norwich, she tells how she paid a visit to Godwin, then to Mrs. Siddons, whom she found nursing her baby; and then to Mrs Inchbald:—

"Mrs. Inchbald," she says, "is as pretty as ever, and much more easy and unreserved in her manner than when I saw her last. She has just got £200 from Sheridan for a farce containing sixty pages only. From her house we drove to the City. You will wonder, perhaps, where we dined. Be it known to you that we never dine when we visit London. Ives Hurry, as soon as we arrive at his house, treats us with as much ice and biscuits as we can eat; we then sally forth, and eat ice again when we want it; so we did yesterday, and Mrs. Siddons' roast beef had no temptation for us."

Amelia Alderson continued to sing, to smile, and to make her friends happy till her twenty-eighth year. Up to that

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time, though she had written many poems, she had not published anything except an anonymous novel called the *Dangers of Coquetry*, which did not attract much attention. It was in 1797 that she first met Mr. Opie, the celebrated painter. He was the son of a Cornish carpenter; his talent for taking portraits attracted the notice of Dr. Wolcot, who introduced him to the London art world. He was soon hailed as a wonder and a genius, and was employed by many of the nobility. "This inspired peasant," as Alan Cunningham called him, was in the thirty-sixth year of his age, and a widower, when he first met his future wife at the house of one of her early friends. The evening was wearing on, and still Miss Alderson had not appeared. Opie was sitting on a sofa beside Mr. F., who had been saying, from time to time, "Amelia is coming, Amelia will surely come; why is she not here?" He was interrupted by Mr. Opie eagerly exclaiming, "Who is that? who is that?" and hastily rising, he pressed forward to be introduced to the new arrival. Miss Alderson had, indeed, entered,

"Bright and smiling, dressed in a robe of blue, her neck and arms bare, and on her head a small bonnet, placed in somewhat coquettish style sideways, and surmounted by a plume of three white feathers. Her beautiful hair hung in rich wavy tresses over her shoulders, her face was kindling with pleasure at sight of her old friends, and her whole appearance was animated and glowing."

Mr. Opie was evidently smitten, charmed, at first sight; and from that moment he became Amelia Alderson's avowed lover. She held back for some time, and declared that his chance of success was but one in a thousand. Yet she had one good reason for loving him—his loving her. Rough and rugged though he was, his affection was genuine; and he had, moreover, the additional attractions of genius and a strong will. They prevailed, and the marriage took place at Marylebone Church, May 8, 1798.

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Mrs. Opie's love for feathers and frippery may be seen by the following list of her trousseau, which is also curious, as showing the fashions of a hundred years ago:—

"Blue satin bonnet russe, with eight blue feathers, nine small feathers, and a feather edge; three blue round feathers and two blue Scotch caps; one striped gold gauze bonnet-russe; four scalloped-edged caps *à la* Marie Stuart; one bead cap, one tiara; two spencers, one white, one black. 2nd Box, No. 1.—Two yards broad figured lace for neck and wrists, buff-satin slip, buff net gown, three muslin gowns and one skirt; three frilled handkerchiefs, one lace cap, and two bands; a set of scarlet ribbon for the gown lined with blue; three lace frills, worked cambric gown and flounces; seven flat feathers and three curled ones," &c., &c.

Mr. Opie was a sensible man as well as a skilful painter; he wished his wife to cultivate her talent for writing, and never checked her ambition to become an author. "On the contrary," she says, "he encouraged it; and our only quarrel was not that I wrote too much, but that I did not write more and better."

In 1801, three years after his marriage, appeared Mrs. Opie's notable tale *Father and Daughter*, which first made her popular. She chose a painful and pathetic subject, and she did well to do so, for her forte was pathos. David, the French artist, took a medallion of her, because she had "so often made him cry." Sir Walter Scott, Sir James Macintosh, and many others, owned that she had the same power of drawing tears from them. She admits in her preface that her novel has no attempt at strong characters, comic situations, bustle, or variety of incident: it is simply a moral tale. Her style is often slipshod and clumsy; and Sydney Smith's criticism—"Tenderness is your forte, madam, carelessness your fault"—is perfectly just. Not with the cheerful scenes of everyday life did she begin her tale; she took the sad history of a scorned and deserte

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woman. The opening sentences are daring and picturesque, and at once arrest attention :—

"The night was dark; the wind blew keenly over the frozen and rugged heath, when Agnes, pressing her moaning child to her bosom, was travelling on foot to her father's habitation. 'Would to God I had never left it!' she exclaimed, as home, and all its enjoyments, rose in fancy to her view."

We soon learn the history of the wanderer. Agnes Fitzhenry, beautiful and attractive, has been entrapped into a Scotch marriage by a designing libertine called Clifford. At a play she overhears a conversation which reveals his treachery. She hears that he is to marry another woman in a few days, and she flies with her child to the home she has forsaken. In the darkness of a frosty night she wanders into a forest, and is overtaken by an escaped lunatic, his chains clanking round him. When morning dawns, she discovers that this pursuer, who has been urging her to destroy her child, is her own father! His keepers overtake and capture him. Agnes's child is nearly frozen to death, and she attempts suicide. Some cottagers rescue her, and she finds a home with her nurse's daughter. The thought of the state to which her father is reduced by her guilt, drives Agnes into a state of repentance and remorse piteous to read of. Her dignity, her love of independence, her eager hope that she may yet restore her father to reason, are touches which Mrs. Opie loves to bring out. After five years' confinement in the asylum, Agnes' father is pronounced incurable and is given up to his daughter. His glimmerings of consciousness, her long vigils last for some time. At length he wakens from a long sleep, recognizes, forgives her, and dies.

"That blessing, the hope of obtaining which alone gave Agnes courage to endure contumely, poverty, fatigue, and sorrow, was for one moment her own, and then snatched

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from her for ever. . . . At the same time were borne to the same grave the father and daughter."

How Clifford came across the funeral of Agnes, and surprises his second wife by snatching up little Edward and driving away with him, is unnatural. The story is over with Agnes and her father.

Mrs. Opie's next tale, *Adeline Mowbray, or Mother and Daughter*, was taken, or, at least, suggested by the sad history of Mary Wollstonecraft, afterwards Mary Godwin, the mother of Mrs. Shelley. Mrs. Opie was a friend of this mistaken but really noble-minded woman, she often corresponded with her, and could, therefore, trace the real workings of such a woman's mind. Adeline Mowbray is the daughter of a young but eccentric widow full of educational theories. Mrs. Mowbray cannot be practical; she loves new and Quixotic ideas, and Adeline becomes equally infected by them. One of the authors most prized by Mrs. Mowbray and her daughter is an ardent young philosopher called Glenmurray, who has written a great deal against the idle ceremony of marriage. Adeline thinks his views are very fine, and resolves never to marry. Meanwhile her mother has taken a second husband, who is inclined to admire Adeline more than she wishes. By her own desire she escapes with Glenmurray from her mother's house. He wishes to go through the ceremony of marriage with her, for he knows the world better than she does; but she will not consent—she is too much infected with her new-fangled philosophy, and with those wild theories which she has imbibed from her youth. Glenmurray really loves her, and is full of tenderness and grief at the result of his own teaching. Her mother is indignant and horrified, refuses to see or to speak to her; while Adeline, conscious of innocence, cannot consider herself guilty, because her actions are the result of her mother's own theories. Then comes Glenmurray's death. She is torn with grief to see

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the man she loves dying before her eyes while she is shunned by every one, insulted, and upbraided. By Glenmurray's dying wish, she marries his friend from a sense of duty and a need of protection. But this husband turns out to be a selfish profligate. At length, Adeline retires to Cumberland, and is found by her mother in a dying state. She is forgiven. Again she finds her mother's face bending over her with affection, but the joy is too great; to find fondness after years of estrangement overpowers her, and she falls back dead.

Mrs. Opie attempted a still more difficult task in *Adeline Mowbray* than in *Father and Daughter*. True, she had reality for a backbone; in some points the story of Mary Wollstonecraft and that of her heroine are identical; both tried to be philosophers, both tried to consider the mere ceremony of marriage as useless and unnecessary, and both had reason bitterly to rue their mistake. *Adeline Mowbray*, however, was not so successful as *Father and Daughter*, the teaching was not so plain, the working of the heart not so easy to unravel. Still, at the time, it made a sensation. Sir James Macintosh—no mean authority—calls it a "most affecting novel; it has occasioned us many painful moments and even cost us some tears."

Mrs. Opie's name as a writer was now established. Her first novel went through eight editions, and her *Simple Tales*, which came out in 1806, her *New Tales*, in four volumes (1818), and her novels of *Temper* and *Madeline* found a large number of readers. Her poems, published a year after *Father and Daughter*, have the same merit of simple and touching pathos. Sydney Smith, when lecturing on Moral Philosophy at the Royal Institution, selected one of them as illustrating the true language of nature and feeling. The lines are tolerably well known, but may be given here as a specimen of Mrs. Opie's verse:—

"Go, youth beloved, in distant glades,
New friends, new hopes, new joys to find;
Yet sometimes deign, midst fairer maids,
To think of her thou leav'st behind—

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Thy love, thy fate, dear youth, to share
Must never be my happy lot,
But thou may'st grant this humble prayer,
Forget me not, forget me not!

"Yet should the thought of my distress
Too painful to thy feelings be,
Heed not the wish I now express,
Nor ever deign to think on me.
But, oh! if grief thy steps attend,
If want, if sickness, be thy lot,
And thou require a soothing friend,
Forget me not, forget me not!"

Mrs. Opie listened, confused but delighted, as these lines were quoted to Sydney Smith's audience. They were also noticed in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review* with special praise. Another poem, *The Orphan Boy's Tale*, is also well known, and the idea of the delighted child flying into the crowded street when the news of Nelson's victory came, and watching the lighted windows flame, while *his* mother sought to force him home—

"She could not bear to see my joy,
For with my father's life 'twas bought,
And I am now an orphan boy,"

is a touch characteristic of Mrs. Opie. She was particularly happy at improvising snatches of poetry. When she was asked if she had written any verses on the absence of Sir James Macintosh in India, she immediately replied in the following neat couplets :—

"No, think not in verse I his absence deplore;
Who a sorrow can sing till that sorrow is o'er?

"And when shall his loss with such sorrow be classed,
O, when shall his absence be pain that is *past!*"

In 1802, the Opies visited Paris and saw Napoleon I. review his troops. Mrs. Opie's frame shook with excitement, for Napoleon was one of her favourite heroes. She remarked his bright, restless expression, and "dark blue eyes beaming

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from under long eyelashes, which glanced at us with a scrutinising but complacent look."

Mr. Opie died in 1807, and was buried at St. Paul's by the side of Sir Joshua Reynolds. After his death, Mrs. Opie returned to Norwich, to her father's house, and made it her home. For three years she mourned her husband's loss, after that time she was tempted to visit London, and repeated these visits annually for several seasons. She was eminently a *femme de société*, a Tom Moore in petticoats, eagerly sought after by the *crême de la crême* of London Society. One evening she dines at Lady Whitbread's, where she meets Lady Roslyn, Lord Dudley, Lyttleton, Sheridan, and the ever-welcome Sydney Smith. At Madame de Staël's she finds Lady Crewe, and the Macintoshes, and Romilly, and was amazed to hear a "plain, unpretending gentleman addressed as '*votre majesté*.'" This "unpretending gentleman" turned out to be the King of the Netherlands.

In 1814, she was in the midst of all the gaieties which followed the peace. Dinners, balls, and visiting filled up the gay widow's time. One evening she was at tne Hamiltons' ball; the next, at Lydia White's soirée (having dined on eggs and coffee), and here she found rank and talent and odd-looking notoriety. The Emperor of Russia was then the observed of all observers, and Mrs. Opie, like all the rest of the world, was Emperor-struck; she had the felicity of squeezing his Majesty's wrist, while other ladies only touched him. On Sunday she went to Bedford Chapel to hear Sydney Smith preach, and had her own *levée* in the afternoon.

"It was *rather* splendid," she remarks, complacently, "consisting of twenty-seven persons, who, men excepted, principally came in carriages. These carriages succeeded each other so quickly that the servants asked my servant what there was to be seen at No. 11, and when he said 'a lady,' they answered, 'What! is she ill!'"

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The next day, Mrs. Opie set off to Mitcham in a coach. "A sad arrival, but I am now in my usual spirits. We are very comfortable, and there is the nicest set of children here; we had them all in last night, and played magical music, and I made myself hoarse, singing through a comb."

Another time, at Lady Charleville's, she sang, *Nay! take it, Sally*, for a venerable blind lady, Lady Sarah Napier (George III.'s first love). One evening, at Lady Cork's, she found Monk Lewis, Horace Twiss, Lady Caroline Lamb, and a host of minor stars. Blücher was expected, but did not arrive, and the difficulty was how to amuse the guests. Lady Caroline proposed acting a proverb, but it ended in their acting a French word. She, Lady Cork, and Miss White, went out of the room, and came back digging with poker and tongs. The word was '*or*.' They dug for ore, and they acted a passion for rage; and then they acted a storm for the whole word—"*orage*."

"Still," writes Mrs. Opie, "The old General did not come, and Lady Caroline disappeared; but, previously, Mrs. Wellesley Pole and her daughter had arrived, bringing with them a beautiful prince—Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg—but saying she feared Blücher would not come. However, we now heard a distant, and then a near hurrah! and a violent knocking at the door. The hurrahs increased, and we all jumped up, exclaiming, 'There's Blücher, at last!' The door opened, the servants calling out—'General Blücher!' on which, in strutted Lady Caroline Lamb, in a cocked hat and great coat."

All these freaks and gaieties, Mrs. Opie enjoyed thoroughly; her vanity was evidently gratified when Baron von Humboldt persisted in calling her *Mademoiselle Opie*—from her youthful appearance; and she was delighted to accept a ticket for a grand ball given to the Duke of Wellington. The ticket cost £4 5s., as she remarks with triumph.

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"I go fully dressed," she adds, in great glee, "but no train; high feathers, with a pink domino of calico, made high, to give me height, and try to disguise me. Lady Cork has given me a most beautiful trimming for the bottom of a dress which I am to wear on the 4th. It is really handsome —a wreath of white satin flowers worked upon net."

Truly, women are contradictory beings! Here is the pathetic authoress of *Father and Daughter*, who drew streams of tears from her readers' eyes, ready to go to a ball at the age of fifty-five, and as eager about her dress as a *débutante* of eighteen.

But whilst she was in this whirlpool of gay life, her sober Quaker friends at Eastham—the Gurneys—did not forget her. John Joseph Gurney wrote her a long letter: "Thou wilt say," he writes, "that thy countrified, drab-coated friends know nothing of the world . . . but I am apt to entertain two notions of the fashionable world: first, that there is in it much evil; and, secondly, that there is in it much to promote forgetfulness of God."

Mrs. Opie took this warning in good part. Indeed, she spoke so lovingly of her drab-coated companion, that it was said she was setting her cap at him. She writes to Elizabeth Fry: "Dear Joseph is come back, and is looking well;" and in her Norwich journal we find: "An agreeable surprise —J. G. G. returned this morning unexpectedly from London." "I had a long *tête à tête* with J. G. G., and read my manuscript to him." "J. G. G. particularly favoured in his ministry; quite painful to me to break up;" and, "Dear J. G. G. very affecting and impressive."

She went to "dear J. G. G.'s" funeral, and she and her father began regularly to attend the Friends' meeting-house at Norwich. In March, 1824—a year before her father's death—she took the decisive step, and became an avowed Quakeress. She began to speak of the day and month by number instead of by name, and to use the "thee" and

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"thou." Notwithstanding her love of bright colours, she attired herself in the sombre costume of the Society, exchanging the hat and feathers for a poke bonnet, and the pink domino for a dress of unassuming silk. The gaieties of her past life rose before her like spectres. "I begin to feel," she writes, "that my time must be made profitable, or I cannot be happy." She attended Sick-poor Committees and Magdalen Committees; no more novels now, that day was over.

In 1822, *Madeline*, a tale of domestic life, had come out; but after her conversion to Quakerism a moral treatise, called *Detraction Displayed*, showed the new bent of her mind. She wrote it, she says, "to expose the most common of all vices, which is found in every class or rank in society —from the peer to the peasant, from the master to the valet, from the mistress to the maid, from the most learned to the most ignorant." Her change of faith caused some commotion in the literary and fashionable world. In the second volume of *Southey's Colloquies*, he speaks of it as follows :—

"I have another woman in my mind's eye, one who has been the liveliest of the lively, the gayest of the gay, admired for her talents by those who knew her only in her writings, and esteemed from her worth by those who were acquainted with her in private life. . . . She has now joined a sect, distinguished from all others for its formalities and enthusiasm. She has assumed the garb and even the shibboleth of the sect, not losing in the change her warmth of heart and cheerfulness of spirit, not gaining by it any sincerity and frankness; for with these nature had endowed her."

Her lively friend, Lady Cork, wrote to her in very different terms from Southey's stately periods :—

"I have too much self," she says, "not to feel the tug at my heart—the no chance I have of enjoying your society.

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Will your primitive cap never dine with me? Pray, pray, *pray*, do not put on the bonnet. So come to me, and be my love in dove-coloured garb, and a simple head-dress. I could fill a paper with fun, only for the cold water of your last. What! do you give up Holkham, your singing and music—and do you really see harm in singing. God bless you. Adieu!"

Mrs. Opie did still pay visits to London, but they were of a soberer kind. She had the good fortune to meet Sir Walter Scott at the house of Sir G. Phillips in Mount Street. The great man took her down to breakfast, and told her that he had cried more over *Father and Daughter* than he ever did over such things.

Between her sixtieth and seventieth years, she visited Paris, and her gaiety sprang up fresher than ever, in spite of her Quaker cap. "Here I have been in Paris six weeks," she writes. "I came for four, but how can I quit this beau Paris et les aimables Parisiens que j'ai trouvés ici?" The Humboldts, Madame de Genlis, the Queen, and the Princess of Orleans—all these notabilities she saw and chatted with.

In Miss Sedgewick's *Letters from Abroad* (1841), she says:—

"I owed Mrs. Opie a grudge for having made me in my youth, cry my eyes out over her stories, but her fair cheerful face forced me to forget it. She long ago forswore the world and all its vanities, and adopted the Quaker faith and costume, but I fancied that her elaborate simplicity and the fashionable little train to her pretty satin gown, indicated how much easier it is to adopt a theory than to change one's habits."

Mrs. Opie still enjoyed attending the Norwich Assizes up to her seventy-fifth year. It happened one summer that the High Sheriff, Baron Alderson and she were chatting together,

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when the judge asked her how she was going home. "She shall go with us," said the High Sheriff, seizing her hand. "I drew back," says Mrs. Opie, "but the judge said, 'Let us take her.' I still resisted, but Sir Edward pushed me in, saying, 'Come along, Brother Opie;' so in I jumped. Little did I think I should ever ride behind four horses, harnessed, and two outriders with trumpets," &c.

So her adventures ended, as they had begun, at the Norwich Assizes. Her spirits were buoyant up to the eventful year 1851, when she visited the Great Exhibition, and proposed a race in wheel-chairs with her friend, Miss Berry.

Two years afterwards, in November, 1853, she died in her eighty-fourth year. It is sometimes difficult to reconcile Mrs. Opie with her books. Cheerful and sunshiny by nature, happy, loving, and beloved, with no rubs of fortune to contend against, her books are, as a rule, full of sadness and desolation, oppressed with Rembrandt-like gloom. We can only account for this by the fact that there is in some minds a love of strong contrasts. Some authors, living in a garret, with hardly a crust of bread to satisfy their hunger, delight in imagining the gilded courts of princes, and the perfumed *salons* of duchesses. In like manner, Amelia Opie, happy in her home and friends, felt a necessity for tears, and loved to describe forlorn outcasts wandering in snowy forests and deserted by the whole world. Thus, she satisfied the inner depths of her soul, and not only wept herself, but made thousands of readers weep with her.

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XII.

JANE AUSTEN.

1775–1817.

Posthumous fame—Birth at Steventon—Good-humoured satire—The Austens leave Steventon—Settle at Bath—Visit to Lyme Regis—Letters from Lyme and Bath—Mr. Austen's death—Chawton Cottage—*Sense and Sensibility*—*Pride and Prejudice*—*Mansfield Park*—*Emma*—*Persuasion*—Death at Winchester.

PRAISE and popularity—how easily these are sometimes given, and how strangely they are withheld! Lady Morgan, sprightly, gay, and brilliant, was in her time the idol of many a *coterie* and the lioness of many a drawing-room. She and her short-lived fame are almost forgotten. Jane Austen, on the contrary, was never "high-placed in hall, a welcome guest." Her life was principally spent in the cheerful obscurity of Steventon or Chawton. During her brief stay in London, shortly before her death, she was never persecuted by admirers or mobbed by sightseers. No one ever sought her autograph or solicited the favour of painting her portrait. At the time of her death, the profits of her four novels then published had not amounted to seven hundred pounds. The opinions passed on her writings, which she collected through her friends for her own amusement, show plainly the low value in which the best story-teller of the age was held by ordinary judges. One lady contemptuously remarked that *Mansfield Park* was a mere

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novel; another considered *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* downright nonsense. The same discerning reader hoped to like *Mansfield Park* better; having finished the first volume, she hoped that she had got through the worst. Another did not care for *Mansfield Park;* nothing interesting in the characters, language poor. One gentleman read the first and last chapters of *Emma*, but did not look at the rest, because he had been told that it was not interesting. The opinions of another gentleman about *Emma* were so bad that they could not be reported to the author. Miss Austen had indeed a difficult task—she had to educate the public taste. Such tales of horror as *The Children of the Abbey* or *The Romance of the Forest* were then the fashion, and she had to bring her readers down to delicately-coloured pictures of ordinary human beings, breathing and speaking in everyday life. Two articles in the *Quarterly Review* show how the judgment about her novels slowly advanced as years went on. The first reviewer, in 1815, found fault with her minute detail, and declared that such characters as Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates, though at first ridiculous, soon became as tiresome in fiction as in real life.

Six years passed; Jane Austen slept in her quiet grave at Winchester Cathedral, and now a second review in the *Quarterly*, this time by Archbishop Whately, gave a very different verdict of her powers. Her "fools" are marked out for special praise. In this respect she is said to show a regard for character hardly exceeded by Shakspeare himself. "It is no fool that can describe fools well, and those who have succeeded with higher characters have often failed in giving individuality to weaker ones." Those who find Miss Austen's "fools" tiresome are told that they must find *Twelfth Night* tiresome; and the admirers of Wilkie's pictures or those of the Dutch school are asked if excellence of imitation may not give attraction to homely things. As to the minuteness of detail, so far from being a fault it is

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declared to be a decided excellence, and absolutely necessary to make readers interested in the characters described.

After this review, Miss Austen's fame went on increasing more and more. Sir Walter Scott, in his Diary for 1826, wrote that she had a talent for describing the feelings and involvements of ordinary life which is the most wonderful he ever met with. "The big bow-wow strain I can do myself like any one now going, but the exquisite touch which makes commonplace things and characters interesting is denied me." Coleridge, Southey, Sydney Smith, Whewell, Sir J. Mackintosh, and Holland, all expressed the greatest admiration for Miss Austen's novels. And in the present day Tennyson is one of her warmest admirers. Clever, illustrious, thinking men prize her books most; they find in them a cheerful repose, a freedom from effect, from violent passions, which interests without exciting. Some of her own sex did not appreciate her so much. Charlotte Brontë said she would not care to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses; and Madame de Staël, when she was lent one of her books, wrote to say that it was "*vulgaire*," the last word that could be rightly applied to it. Lord Macaulay's enthusiasm about Miss Austen knew no bounds. He calls her a woman of whom England may justly be proud. "All her characters, though in a certain sense commonplace, are as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. There are, for example, four clergymen, none of whom we should be surprised to find in any parsonage in the kingdom —Mr. Edward Ferrars, Mr. Henry Tilney, Mr. Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Elton. They are all specimens of the upper part of the middle class, they have all been liberally educated, they are all young, they are all in love. Not one of them has a hobby-horse, not one of them has a ruling passion. Who would not have expected them to be all insipid likenesses of each other? No such thing. Harpagon is not more unlike Jourdain, Joseph Surface is not more

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unlike Sir Lucius O'Trigger, than every one of Miss Austen's young divines to all his reverend brethren. And this is done by touches so delicate as to elude analysis."

Last comes Mr. G. H. Lewes. In a letter to Charlotte Brontë he tells her to beware of melodrama, to follow the counsel which shines out of Miss Austen's mild eyes, and adds that he would rather have written *Pride and Prejudice* than any of the Waverley novels. "You must learn," he says, to "acknowledge Miss Austen as one of the greatest artists, one of the greatest painters of human character, and one of the writers with the nicest sense of means to an end that has ever lived." This is perhaps the deepest truth that has ever been said in her praise. Miss Austen knew exactly what she could do. In vain did one of her counsellors urge her to write an historical romance founded on the House of Saxe-Coburg, or to describe the life and character of a clergyman who should be, like Beattie's Minstrel,

> "Silent when glad, affectionate though shy. . . . .
> And now he laughed aloud, he scarce knew why."

Jane Austen turned a deaf ear to all such advice. "I could no more write an historical romance," she replies, "than an epic poem. The comic part of the clergyman's character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary. I may boast myself to be the most unlearned and uninformed female that ever dared to be an authoress."

Half playfully, half satirically, she drew up a paper headed, "Plan of a novel according to hints from various quarters," but all the time she kept steadily to her own plans. She never attempted bursts of poetry, fine sentiments, or brilliant descriptions of scenery; there are no inequalities in her writings, her style is always clear and to the point. She is never pathetic, never pedantic, and never dull. She never obtrudes her own selfism; she is solely intent on weaving the threads of her different characters. She is, therefore, a perfect story-teller. Not one of her

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novels could possibly be dramatised; there are no telling situations in them; the characters give the interest, and the sly, delicate touches give the point, and yet the portrait-gallery which was before Jane Austen's eyes was far from an extensive one. Beyond the clergymen about Steventon, the partners and dowagers at the Bath balls, and the squires and squiresses about Chawton, she had few opportunities of studying human nature. Novelists are often advised to travel, to see life, but Jane Austen never travelled, never even crossed the Channel, and yet her quick, observant eyes noted down far more than any of her sisterhood have ever done. So true it is "that what we find in life depends on what we bring into it."

More than half a century had passed away since Jane Austen's death, and though letters and biographies of commonplace scribblers were deluging the press, no life of the greatest character-painter of the age had appeared. At last, a short memoir by the Rev. J. Austen Leigh gave us a few particulars of that "dear Aunt Jane" who had been a special favourite with all her nephews and nieces. From this we learn that Jane Austen was born at Steventon Parsonage, in Hampshire, on the 16th of December, 1775. Her father, the Rev. George Austen, was a good scholar, and increased his income by taking pupils, amongst whom he once had a son of the celebrated Warren Hastings. Mr. Austen was a remarkably good-looking man, and was known during his year of office at Oxford as "the handsome proctor." When he was more than seventy years old, he attracted attention at Bath by his fine features and snow-white hair. The Austens had been originally clothiers, but Jane inherited some aristocratic blood through her mother, who had been a Miss Leigh, and whose paternal grandmother was a sister of the first Duke of Chandos. Of Jane's three elder brothers, two, James and Henry, became clergymen. The second, Edward, was adopted by his cousin, Mr. Knight, of Godmersham Park, in Kent, and Chawton

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House in Hampshire, and he finally came into possession of both properties, and took the name of Knight. Jane had an elder sister, Cassandra, for whom her love was so great that her mother said, "If Cassandra was going to have her head cut off, Jane would insist on sharing her fate."

When Cassandra was sent to school at Reading, Jane went with her, not because she was old enough to learn much, but because she would have been miserable without her. She always spoke of Cassandra as of one wiser and better than herself. The two sisters lived in the same home and shared the same room till separated by death. Cassandra, we are told, was colder and calmer than Jane—less bright and demonstrative. It was a remark in the family that "Cassandra had the merit of having her temper always under command, but Jane had the happiness of a temper that never required to be commanded."

Two younger brothers, Francis and Charles, brought a lively element into the vicarage party. Both went into the Navy, and Francis lived to be G.C.B. and Senior Admiral of the Fleet. The comings and goings of these two naval brothers, their voyages, their prize money, the presents they brought home of gold chains and topaz crosses, afforded a never-failing topic of interest. Jane Austen always felt herself at home among ships and sailors, and in William Price and Admiral Crofts she has given us two genuine sailor portraits. Steventon is a small rural village upon the chalk hills of Hampshire. The living was in the gift of Mr. Knight, and as he did not reside at the manor-house, Mr. Austen was a sort of deputy squire.

The parsonage — since pulled down — stood says Mr. Austen Leigh, "in a shallow valley surrounded by sloping meadows well sprinkled with elm trees." The chief beauty of the neighbourhood consisted in its hedgerows, which made shady rustic shrubberies where early primroses and anemonies carpeted the ground. One of these was called "The Wood Walk," another "The Church Walk," leading

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up to the manor-house and the church, which was seven centuries old, and had narrow Early English windows. In the pleasant sociable life of Steventon the first twenty-five years of Jane Austen's life was spent. Her parents were comfortably off; they had neighbours and cousins to entertain and to visit; they kept a carriage and a pair of horses, which last were occasionally used, like those of Mr. Bennett, for farm work. The young ladies sometimes trudged on pattens through the muddy roads, for their great friends, the Lefroys, lived in the adjoining parish of Ashe.

Jane Austen began to write at a very early age. Her family have an old copy-book containing several tales which seem to have been written when she was almost a child. These tales are intended to be nonsensical, "but the nonsense," says Mr. Austen Leigh, "has spirit in it, and the style is remarkably pure, quite free from those unmeaning ornaments which young writers love so well." As Jane went on, her tales became burlesques, ridiculing the improbable adventures then to be found in the popular romances of the day. She seemed to be teaching herself how NOT to write. Her contempt for that silly, high-flown state of mind which expects a mystery in everything is shown by an incident in *Northanger Abbey*, when Catherine Morland, fired with curiosity, pulls out a bundle of dusty papers from an ancient cabinet only to find them to be a roll of old washing-bills! This propensity to good-humoured satire is remarkable in a young girl, for youth is generally the age for enthusiasm and highly-wrought expectations. Satire usually comes later, but Jane Austen's keen insight into the ridiculous was too strong ever to have been kept down.

Pride and Prejudice was the first novel actually finished. She began it in October, 1796, when she was twenty-one, and it was completed in about ten months—in August, 1797. The tone of sober common sense, of perfect freedom from all extravagance, would make any one imagine that such a

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book must have been written by an experienced middle-aged writer who had mixed much in society, and was looking on secretly amused at the follies of his neighbours. And yet Jane Austen was scarcely beyond her teens when the first copy of the MS. was put aside. The reality about the book is so strong that one feels convinced that the five Miss Bennetts must have danced at the Meryton assemblies, that Lydia must have giggled about her dear Wickham, and that Mr. Collins must have gazed with deference at Lady Catherine de Burgh's equipage as it passed his humble door.

Pride and Prejudice was, however, fated not to be published for fifteen long years. Jane Austen's father wrote to offer it to Dodsley, then an eminent London publisher, and received a curt refusal by the next post. But Jane's calm, equable disposition was proof against disappointment. The very same month that Dodsley's epistle arrived at Steventon she began *Sense and Sensibility*. Part of this had belonged to an earlier tale called *Elinor and Marianne*. *Sense and Sensibility* is, therefore, one of the first creations of Jane Austen's busy brain. *Northanger Abbey* was composed the following year (1798), and it completed the trio of novels written at Steventon.

All this time the good folks of the neighbourhood little guessed that there was "a chiel amang them takin' notes," and that this "chiel" was bright, lively Jane Austen, who was always ready for a game of Commerce or lottery, for an occasional dance, or a visit to Bath to her cousins the Coopers. Sir Egerton Brydges (who was brother to Mrs. Lefroy) says in his autobiography—"When I knew Jane Austen I never suspected that she was an authoress, but my eyes told me that she was fair and handsome, slight and elegant, but with cheeks a little too full." Her nephew's recollections, which date from a later period, agree with this account. He says that,

"In person Jane Austen was very attractive; her figure

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was rather tall and slender, her step light and firm, and her whole appearance expressive of health and animation. In complexion she was a clear brunette with a rich colour ; she had full round cheeks, with mouth and nose small and well-formed, bright hazel eyes and brown hair forming natural curls close round her face. If not so regularly handsome as her sister, yet her countenance had a peculiar charm of its own."

She soon took to wearing caps, and in the likeness drawn by her sister Cassandra she is taken with one of those small quilled tulle caps which are very becoming to some faces, and were then worn by comparatively young women. In this drawing she appears to be under thirty, short round curls shade her forehead, and her expression is peculiarly arch, intelligent, and animated. She seems to be amused and wide-awake to everything that is passing around her. No tale of blighted hopes or crushed affections can be told of Jane Austen. Her sister, Cassandra, had a sad ending to her love affairs, for the young clergyman to whom she was engaged, not being rich enough to marry, went out to the West Indies as chaplain to a regiment, caught the yellow fever on his arrival, and died in a few days. Jane's sympathy for her sister must have been great, but no such loss came to her. Many may have sighed for her, but her own family declare that she remained heart-whole. Passing fancies she had, no doubt, in abundance. Miss Mitford's mother, who, as Miss Russell, lived near Steventon, told her daughter that " Jane Austen was the prettiest, silliest, most affected husband-hunting butterfly she ever remembers ;" but as Jane was only seven years old when Mrs. Mitford married, such evidence must rest principally on hearsay, and is not worth much. A reputation for flirting or husband-hunting is sometimes very easily won.

Early in 1801 Mr. Austen determined on resigning his living at Steventon in favour of his eldest son, and removing

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to Bath. The decision was made when Jane was away from home, and it was soon carried out. To Bath, then, the Austen family went, first to No. 4, Sidney Terrace, and afterwards to Green Park Buildings. Jane was now twenty-six; during the four years' life at Bath she put away her pen, kept her eyes and ears wide open, went a good deal into society, danced at the assemblies, and assisted at the pump-room promenades, which were then crowded with gouty admirals, hypochondriac countesses, idle clergymen, and young ladies who had come to drink the waters, to stare at their friends, to amuse and to be amused. Once Jane Austen went with her parents on a visit to Lyme Regis; here she became acquainted with the Cobb, which she afterwards made the scene of Louisa Musgrove's fall in *Persuasion*.

Some of her chatty letters to her sister during this visit afford curious peeps into her pursuits, and are written with an ease not common in those days.

"The ball," she says, "last night was pleasant, but not full for Thursday. My father stayed contentedly till half-past nine (we went a little after eight) and then walked home with a lanthorn, though I believe the lanthorn was not lit as the moon was up, but sometimes this lanthorn may be a great convenience to him. My mother and I stayed about an hour later. Nobody asked me the two first dances, the two next I danced with Mr. Crawford, and had I chosen to stay longer might have danced with Mr. Granville's son, whom my friend Miss A. introduced me to, or with an odd-looking man who had been eyeing me for some time, and at last, without any introduction, asked me if I meant to dance again. I think he must be Irish by his ease, and because I imagine him to belong to the Hon. ——'s bold queer-looking people, just fit to be quality at Lyme. I called yesterday morning on Miss A., and was introduced to her father and mother. Like other young ladies, she is considerably genteeler than her parents. Mrs. A. sat darning a pair of

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stockings during the whole of my visit. But do not mention this, lest a warning should serve as an example. We afterwards walked together on the Cobb. She is very conversable in a common way; I do not perceive wit or genius, but she has sense and some degree of taste, and her manners are engaging. She seems to like people rather too easily."

Again, in a letter from Gay Street, Bath, she writes to her sister with keen little touches of observation :—

"Poor Mrs. Stent! It has been her lot to be always in the way, but one must be merciful, for perhaps in time we may come to be Mrs. Stents ourselves, always unequal to everything, and unwelcome to everybody. My morning engagement was with Mr. Cookes, and our party consisted of George and Mary, a Mr. L., Miss B., who had been with us to the concert, and the youngest Miss W.—not Julia, we have done with her, she is very ill, but Mary—Mary W.'s turn is actually come to be grown-up and to wear great square muslin shawls. I have not expressly enumerated myself, but there I was, and my cousin George was very kind and talked sense to me every now and then in the intervals of his more animated fooleries with Miss B., who is very young and rather handsome. There was a monstrous deal of stupid quizzing and commonplace nonsense talked, but scarcely any wit. All that bordered on it came from my cousin George, whom altogether I like very much. Mr. B. seems nothing more than a tall young man."

"Cousin George" was the Rev. George Leigh Cooke, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and he afterwards became tutor to Dr. Arnold, Keble, and Sir J. Coleridge. This pleasant social life at Bath was cut short by the death of Jane Austen's father, which took place in 1805. He was buried in Walcot Church, and the widow and her two daughters, after going into lodgings for a few months,

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removed to Castle Square, Southampton, where they remained for four years. Little record of what passed there exists. In 1809 Mrs. Austen was offered the use of Chawton Cottage by her second son, Mr. Knight, now lord of the manor.

The little family were hardly settled at Chawton when Jane again thought of those rolls of manuscript which had lain by so long. Since 1798, when *Northanger Abbey* was finished, much had, no doubt, been observed, but nothing had been written, and nothing had yet been published. *Northanger Abbey* had been sold to a Bath publisher for ten pounds, but so little value did he put upon it that he left it to lie on his dusty shelves, afraid of the risk of bringing it out. There it remained till it was repurchased by Mr. Henry Austen, and it was not printed till after Miss Austen's death. The first year at Chawton was spent revising what had been already written, and in 1811 *Sense and Sensibility* came out. Jane Austen thought the £150 which she received from its sale "a prodigious reward" for what had cost her nothing. No record is left of her hopes and fears while this first nursling of hers was making its way in the world, but when *Pride and Prejudice* was published two years afterwards we get some curious peeps of what she felt from a letter to her sister :—

"I want to tell you," she says, "that I have got my own darling child from London. Miss B. dined with us on the very day of the book's coming, and in the evening we fairly set at it, and read half the first volume to her. She was amused, poor soul! That she could not help, you know, with two such people to lead the way, but she really does seem to like Elizabeth. I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like HER at least I do not know."

She had taken great pains with *Pride and Prejudice;* she

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had "lopt and cropt it," and though she had fits of disgust during the reading out, and thought it too light and bright and sparkling, still "on the whole," she says "she was quite vain enough." She was never careless. "I work," she writes to her nephew, "on a small bit of ivory with so fine a brush as produces little or no effect after much labour."

Mansfield Park was begun about this time; it was the first of the three novels written at Chawton, and all three show Miss Austen at her very best. Twelve years' observation had brought forth abundant fruit, and she had gained in finish, in refinement, and variety. The getting up of the private theatricals at Mansfield Park, the hopes and doubts of the whole party, with Mrs. Norris busy, meddling, and bustling about, are told as only Miss Austen could tell such things, while easy-going, languid Lady Bertram is one of those commonplace people that ordinary novelists may look upon with despair. Fanny Price, the humble relation in a great family, is a far more interesting heroine than Miss Austen's own favourite, Elizabeth, in *Pride and Prejudice*.

After *Mansfield Park* was published she began to be afraid that she had written herself out, but the gallery of portraits in *Emma* shows no falling off. There we have simple-minded Mr. Woodhouse, voluble Miss Bates, pleased with everything, alike delighted at the hind-quarter of pork, at her niece Jane, and at the rivet in her mother's spectacles; there, too, is the bride, Mrs. Elton, fresh from the glories of Maple Grove, full of the barouche-landau, and eager to patronize every one. Emma's faults as a spoiled child, her wilfulness, her love of managing and match-making, her obstinate fancy for pretty, silly Harriet Smith, who really was in love three times in one year, show the wonderful fineness of Jane Austen's touches.

All the time that she was writing her three best novels she had no private study: she wrote in the general sitting-room at her little mahogany desk, and when visitors interrupted, a handkerchief or a newspaper was thrown over the

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tell-tale MSS. Very often her nephews and nieces rushed in, and she was always ready to break off from her writing to tell them long delightful fairy stories. One of her nieces as a child used to put by things in her mind and say to herself, "I will keep this for Aunt Jane." "Aunt Jane" was as willing to nurse the sick as to laugh with the gay or comfort the sorrowful. She was essentially a womanly woman. Everything that she did with her fingers was well done. She wrote a clear, firm hand, as easy to read as print. She excelled in games of skill, such as spillikins and cup-and-ball, and was able to catch the ball on the point a hundred times running. But fine needlework was her special *forte*, and she was celebrated for the beauty of her satin-stitch. Her family still have a flowered silk housewife delicately worked by her skilful hands. It was done for her sister-in-law, and contains fine needles and thread. In the pocket is a slip of paper with the lines—

"This little bag I hope will prove
To be not vainly made,
For should you thread and needle want
It will afford you aid.
And as we are about to part,
'Twill serve another end,
For when you look upon this bag
You'll recollect your friend."

Jane Austen had a taste for making smart verses. Her nephew gives a few specimens of which the following is one, "On the Marriage of a Middle-aged Flirt with a Mr. Wake, whom it was supposed she would hardly have accepted in her youth":—

"Maria, good-humoured and tall,
For a husband was at her last stake,
And having in vain danced at many a ball,
Is now happy to *jump at a wake*."

Another is even better, "On Reading in the Newspapers the Marriage of Mr. Gell, of Eastbourne, with Miss Gill:"—

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"Of Eastbourne, Mr. Gell,
From being perfectly well,
Became dreadfully ill
For the love of Miss Gill,
So he said with some sighs
I'm the slave of your eyes (i's).
Oh! restore, if you please,
By accepting my ease (*E*'s)."

She never seems to have shown any satire in her personal relations with others. None of her acquaintances ever accused her of having "put them into a book." She told a friend that she had a dread of what she called an "invasion of social proprieties." She thought it quite fair to note peculiarities and weaknesses, but that it was her desire to create, not to reproduce, "besides," she added, "I am too proud of my gentlemen to admit that they were only Mr. A. or Colonel B." Her favourite heroes were Edmund Bertram and Emma's Mr. Knightley, but even these she modestly said were very far from being what she knew English gentlemen often are.

Persuasion, the last novel she wrote, was finished in August, 1816, and was not published till after her death. The families of Elliots, Musgroves, and Crofts, the little interests of Bath life, and the returning affection of Captain Wentworth for his former love, Anne Elliot, are touched with all that liveliness and delicacy which make Miss Austen's books models of art.

But even as she was writing the last chapters, a severe illness was coming on. She gradually grew weaker. The sitting-room at Chawton Cottage had only one sofa, usually reserved for Mrs. Austen, who was over seventy. Jane, afraid that it might be now left for her, contrived a couch out of two chairs, and said it was much more comfortable than a real sofa. As spring came on, she went with her sister to lodgings in Winchester, that she might be near her doctor; but nothing could be done to save her life. Her sweetness of disposition never left her. Sometimes she was as playful as

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ever, and amused her sister and sister-in-law in their sorrow. To the last she seems to have thought more of others than of herself. In one of her letters written just before her death she hopes that her dearest sister, her tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse, has not been made ill by her exertions. "As to what I owe her," she says, "and the anxious affection of all my beloved family on this occasion, I can only cry over it, and pray God to bless them more and more."

On the 18th of July, 1817, she breathed her last, in her forty-second year. When she was asked if she wanted anything she replied, "Nothing but death." She was buried in Winchester Cathedral, nearly opposite to the beautiful chantry tomb of William of Wykeham. Some years ago, when a gentleman was visiting the cathedral, he asked to be shown Miss Austen's tomb, and the verger said, "Pray, sir, can you tell me whether there is anything remarkable about that lady? so many people want to know where she is buried." Surely a prophet has no honour in his own country! But Jane Austen's fame will increase rather than diminish. One of Macaulay's unfulfilled intentions was to have written a memoir of her, with notices of her works, and to have devoted the profits towards building a monument to her in Winchester Cathedral; but she needs no such monument. She has become a classic. Notwithstanding the ever-flowing tide of new novelists, fresh editions of Jane Austen's works are continually being issued. When young writers ask despairingly what writer they ought to study, every good judge of literature will answer at once —Jane Austen. Her subtle humour, her delicacy of touch, her innate perception of character, exalt her to the rank of genius.

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XIII.

LADY MORGAN (SYDNEY OWENSON).

1783-1859.

Birth on Christmas morning—Arrival at Fishamble Street—At school at Clontarf—Mr. Owenson's bankruptcy—Sydney's independent plans—First appearance at Bracklin Castle—*St. Clair*—Interview with Mr. Smith—Journey to London—*The Wild Irish Girl*—At Baronscourt—Marriage with Sir Charles Morgan—*O'Donnel*—*Florence M'Carthy*—Books on France and Italy—Success in Society—Leaves Dublin—Widowhood and death.

"I ENTER my protest against dates," cries Lady Morgan in her Autobiography; "what has a woman to do with dates? I mean to have none of them." We have some reason, however, to suppose that 1783 was the year when the lucky, fascinating Sydney Owenson first saw the light. But though she preserves an obstinate silence as to the year, she has no objection to tell the day—she was born on Christmas morning, while chimes were ringing, chimneys were smoking, and friends were feasting in the "ancient ould" city of Dublin. Among these festive supper-tables, was one presided over by Robert Owenson, a gay, handsome Irish actor. The circle gathered round him was oddly composed of musical composers and clergymen. Father Faber, a noted Dominican friar; Counsellor Lysaght, an eloquent wit and barrister; the Rev. Charles Macklin, nephew to Macklin the actor, and a first-rate performer on the bag-pipes, were among the guests. It was a fitting occasion for the brilliant Sydney, who was eminently

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a being formed for society, to make her *entrée* into the world. Two o'clock struck; Mr. Owenson disappeared from the table, and on his return announced the birth of a "dear little Irish girl—the very thing I have always wished for." The "blessed baby" was brought in, her health was drunk with three times three, by the title of "Foghan Foh!" or "Wait Awhile," and Mr. Owenson sang first in Irish, and then in English, Carolan's famous song of "O'Rourke's Noble Feast." The chorus was lustily repeated by the company, who joined in—

> "Oh! you are welcome heartily,
> Welcome, grammachree,
> Welcome heartily, welcome joy!"

The career of Robert Owenson was romantic. His mother had been a granddaughter of Sir Malby Crofton, of Longford House, in Sligo. She had eloped with a stalwart young farmer, and lost caste accordingly. Her musical skill was so great that she was called *Clasagh na Valla*—the harp of the valley. Her beautiful voice was inherited by her only son, Robert; he was patronised by a rich Galway squire, Mr. Blake, who brought him to London and placed him under the musical tuition of Dr. Arne. Young Robert soon became stage-struck; he failed as a tragic actor, but succeeded as Captain Macheath in the *Beggar's Opera*. After some years' engagement at Covent Garden he married Miss Jane Hill, of Shrewsbury, the "sober steadfast daughter" of a substantial citizen. She hated the stage, and persuaded her easy-going husband to become an oratorio singer. This he did, but his dramatic tendencies were so strong that when Mr. Daly, of Castle Daly, the patentee of the Theatre Royal in Dublin, asked him to become deputy-manager, he willingly consented. His wife was not told till after the articles were signed. Her horror of Irish exaggeration and of dear dirty Dublin was great. She was, moreover, an ardent disciple of Lady Huntingdon, and found some

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SYDNEY, LADY MORGAN.

BORN 1783; DIED APRIL 13TH, 1859.

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comfort during her exile in visiting a friend, the wife of a Wesleyan minister, who lived in the town of Portarlington, celebrated at that time as the retreat for a number of French Huguenots.

Lady Morgan tells how she, her mother, and her little sister Olivia drove from Portarlington one dreary winter's evening. Their vehicle crept up the ill-paved hill of an old street, in the oldest part of Dublin called Fishamble Street. Here Mr. Owenson, who had hopelessly quarrelled with his patron, Mr. Daly, was remodelling a theatre out of an old music-hall. A gaunt man with a flaring lantern, who rang a bell as he came forward, announced himself as Pat Brennan, "the man about the place from the beginning of time and before." Escorted by Mr. Owenson, the travellers were brought into a vast space with an atmosphere of dust and smoke. Stunned by "the fall of hammers, the grinding of saws, and the screwing of wheels," they crossed a long plank that shivered over an open pit, where some remains of velvet seats were still visible; then through mountains of chips and mounds of sawdust they came to a large well-proportioned room. "This will be the green-room," said Mr. Owenson, "and in this room, my dear Jenny, Handel gave his first concert of the 'Messiah.'" Little Sydney, who was of an inquiring turn, immediately said, "Papa, was Handel a carpenter?" But her mother told her sharply not to talk, but to mind where she was treading, for she had nearly fallen into a "paint-pot and spoiled her beautiful new cardinal." After peeping into a terrible place called the Death Chamber, where the floor had given way, the little party went up a wide flight of stairs; branches of trees, gushing waters, and pendant stalactites hung on every side. This was part of the old Ridottos, and when an enormous cat sprang across, Pat Brennan coolly observed that it was one of the wild cats the place is full of, with "*stings in their tails;* only for them we could not live with the rots (rats)." A large square place, surrounded by pastoral scenery, and

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lit by a *real* moon, was hardly so welcome as the supper-table, over which hung a lofty "branch of lights that might have done credit to the banquet of Macbeth." Beefsteaks and punch-royal were served, and the wearied party retired to rest. But Molly, the children's maid, a semi-French importation from Portarlington, told her mistress next morning that the life was frightened out of her by Betty calling out, "Are ye awake, Mrs. Molly? the rots are dragging the bed from under me." It was amidst these strange scenes that Sydney Owenson's education began. Her mother had in her mind's eye the recollection of a model child who had read her Bible three times through before she was five years old, and had knitted all the stockings worn by the coachman. But, alas for Sydney! she could not even learn a few verses from the genealogy of the patriarchs, though she could mimic everybody she saw. She imitated Jemmy M'Crackin, her father's hair-dresser, and opened a shop which she filled with theatrical wigs; over the window she wrote:

"Sydney Owenson, System Tête and Peruke Maker."

Connemara cousins were always dropping in at Fishamble Street, and sometimes there were religious synods, in which Father Faber, Mr. Macklin, and Mr. Langtry—a deputation from Lady Huntingdon's connection—took part. Sydney loved to be present at one of these discussions. Olivia was sent to bed, but there was no getting rid of *her*. A country house was taken at Drumcondra, and here Mrs. Owenson breathed her last. A popular Irish festival called "Riding the Fringes" was going on at the time; all the servants had run out to look at it, and Sydney was the only one present to receive her mother's last directions. "Should your father give you another mamma, as is most probable, you will be a good child to her in duty and obedience," said the dying woman. "No, no, mamma, *indeed* I won't," sobbed candid Sydney.

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Mr. Owenson's lamentations were loud and even poetical. He brought his little girls to a carefully chosen French Huguenot school, kept by Madame Tersen, at Clontarf, near Dublin. They were led into a large room with desks, backboards and stocks, and left alone with two other girls, who eyed the newcomers sulkily and shyly. At last the eldest broke silence by saying, "What is your name?" "Sydney Owenson," was the answer. "*My* name," continued the questioner, "is Mary Anne Grattan, and my papa is the greatest man in Ireland. What is *your* papa?" Sharp-witted Sydney, never at a loss, replied, "My papa is free of *the six and ten per cents!*" This was Greek to her and to everybody else, but it sounded grand, and had the desired effect of overawing Miss Mary Anne Grattan.

The two little Owensons remained three years at Madame Tersen's, and were then sent to a finishing school kept by Mrs. Anderson, who had been governess at the Marquis of Drogheda's. Whatever Mr. Owenson's faults were, he spared no expense on the education of his daughters, and wore threadbare coats covered by a surtout in order that they might have a good music-mistress. Every Sunday he called to take them a walk in Sackville Street, and the fashionables of Dublin seldom passed without saying, "There goes Owenson with his two dear little girls." The beauty of Olivia, who had lovely golden curls, was remarkable, and Sydney had, as she complacently observes, a certain jaunty little air of her own, peculiarly Irish. That she might have made a good actress is probable, but Mr. Owenson often said he would rather see his daughters selling cockles than see them the first *prima donnas* in Europe. He seldom took them to the theatre, but was strict in making them attend church whether he went with them or not.

The father was always in some scrape or another. A lawsuit about his great national theatre went against him, and, to make amends for his loss, the Marquis of Ormond proposed that he should take the management of a theatre

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at Kilkenny. Kilkenny, with its castle, its picture gallery, and Black Abbey, was an interesting and suggestive place for the Owensons to pitch their temporary tent. Some of the officers of the Irish Brigade had sought refuge there after the French Revolution, and these heroes were afterwards reproduced in "Florence McCarthy" and "O'Donnel." Sydney's brain at this time teemed with fancies. Her father had been vain enough to get printed some of her poems, written "by a young lady between the age of twelve and fourteen," and this little volume had, no doubt, kindled her literary ambition. At Kilkenny, too, her long career of flirtation began. Her sister Olivia, then an "unformed lump of a girl," used to tell how she returned from a country walk, and found Sydney and two officers, Captain White Benson and Captain Erle, of the 6th, sitting in the parlour, talking high sentiment, and all shedding tears. Molly came in to lay the cloth, and, thinking they had stayed long enough, said bluntly, "Come, be off wid yez; the master 'll be coming in to his dinner, and what will he say to find ye here fandangoing with Miss Sydney?" Olivia, who had no patience with sentiment, pelted them all with apples which she had picked in her ramble, and Sydney, who had been "enjoying her sorrows," shook her black curls and burst out laughing.

Real troubles were close at hand. Debts and difficulties loomed over reckless, good-natured Mr. Owenson. After the theatrical season at Kilkenny a statute of bankruptcy was brought against him, and he had to fly from his creditors. He left his little girls in lodgings at St. Andrew's Street, in Dublin, under the care of faithful Molly, then he drove away in a yellow chaise. One of Sydney's letters, addressed to her "dearest sir and most dear papa," tells how the poor loving little girls remained with their necks stretched out of the window, and Molly crying over them, "Musha, musha!" Suddenly she screamed, "See what God has sent to comfort you!" and in a burst of sunshine down came flying a

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beautiful gold-coloured bird. What should this turn out to be but "Mrs. Shee's old Tom pigeon, who roosts every night on St. Andrew's Church, and which her mischievous son had painted *yellow!*" Great fun of Saint Molly and her miracle followed, and Olivia drew a funny sketch of her. Smiles and tears are oddly mixed up in Sydney's inimitable letter. "An Essay on the Human Understanding, by Mr. Locke, gent.," set her thinking of her first recollections—the smell of mignonette, and her father's singing of Drimindhu, *The Black Cow*, which always made her cry. Later on, she heard of the terrible statute of bankruptcy, and all the energy and independence of her nature came out. Along with the quicksilver temperament of her Irish father she had inherited from her English mother an element of sturdy common sense which served as ballast to her more brilliant qualities.

"I am resolved," she writes to her father, "to relieve you and to earn money for you, instead of spending the little that you will have for some time to come. I will not go to any school where they can teach me nothing that I did not know before. Now, dear papa, I have *two novels nearly finished.* The first is *St. Clair*. I wrote it in imitation of *Werther*, which I read in school holidays last Christmas. The second is a French novel, suggested by reading *Memoirs of the Duc de Sully*, and falling very much in love with Henri IV. Now if I had time and quiet I am sure I could sell them; and observe, sir, Miss Burney got three thousand pounds for *Camilla*. But all this will take time."

Meanwhile Olivia was to be sent to Madame Dacier's for £25 a year, and Molly was to be children's maid at the same school. Independent Sydney herself was to go as "instructress or companion to young ladies." Having formed her plans, she acted on them. *Aide toi, et Dieu t'aidera*, was henceforth to be her motto, which she first heard at a party at General Count O'Haggerty's. The little girls

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had got an invitation through their dancing-master, M. Fontaine, and they and their singing had made a decided sensation.

With twenty pounds sent by her father, Sydney paid for the lodgings at St. Andrews Street. "Maybe I did not walk into Mrs. Shee's dirty parlour and throw down seven golden guineas, Molly crying out, 'We will trouble you for a receipt to *that*, if you please!'" The difficulty now was to get a situation. The Rev. Peter Lefanu, an eminent preacher, was looking out for a governess for his friend, Charles Sheridan, and paid Sydney a visit. Taking up a volume of Locke, he said, "Let me hear your definition of an innate idea." "Why, sir," replied Sydney, "I had no idea of *you* until I saw and heard you preach your beautiful sermon for the poor women of the Lying-in Hospital, but having heard and seen you, I have an idea of you which can never be removed." He actually threw himself back in his chair, took the little flatterer's hand, "and, will you believe it, papa, *kissed* it!"

But in spite of this pretty compliment the Sheridan plan fell through, and Sydney was finally engaged by Mrs. Fetherston, of Bracklin Castle. The evening before her departure she went to a *petit bal d'adieu* which M. Fontaine gave in her honour. She dressed herself in a muslin frock, pink silk stockings and shoes, and was to change her costume in time to catch the mail coach. But alas for plans when dancing was concerned! She was just dancing down "Money in Both Pockets" with a very nice young man, Mr. Buck, when the horn blew at the end of the street. All that could be done was for Molly to throw a warm cloak over her, and with her own bonnet and a little bundle of "things, she flew down the flags that were frosted over," and got to the mail just as the guard was mounting to his place. She was poked in and the door banged to. "Is there any one inside?" asked a gentleman at one of the stages. "Only an old lady, sir, as far as Kinegad." "Oh,

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by Jove! I say, coachy, I'll take a seat by you." But at Kinegad, Sydney's pink silk shoe betrayed itself. The gentleman seized hold of it and cried, "What! let such a foot as *that* sink into the snow!" so he took her in his arms, placed her before a roaring turf fire, and made a great many apologies to the supposed old lady, but, woful to say, her bundle and portmanteau had gone on in the Kinegad mail, and her whole stock of clothes consisted of a white muslin frock, pink silk stockings and shoes, Molly's warm cloak, and an old bonnet! Was ever governess fated to appear in such a trim? But there was no help for it. She got into Mr. Fetherston's carriage and was driven to Bracklin.

The family stared, but they soon laughed at the doleful tale of the *petit bal d'adieu*. Borrowed clothes made everything right. In the evening Sydney sang *Ned of the Hills* and *Barbara Allan* with great effect, and ended by dancing a jig in the back hall. "We all danced beautifully," she says, "and I came off with flying colours." This was her first jig in company, but by no means her last. She soon fell into her new position, though she played an odd prank now and then. One morning, seeing the water-cask boy on his way with a cart to a pure spring, she mounted up with him, for it would be "charming to have a drive before breakfast" and to think of her novel as she went along. She was then in the middle of *St. Clair*. Invited by Miss Mary Reynolds to "eat a fresh griddle-cake, fresh-churned butter, and an egg that was not laid yet but would be in a minute," she yielded. On her way back, however, the bung came out of the cask, and, dripping like a mermaid, she arrived at Bracklin. There was some talk of writing to her father, but her Irish songs brought her into favour again, and her offence was forgiven.

The Fetherstons had a house in Dublin, at Dominick Street, and Sydney often went there with them. One of the events of this part of her life was hearing Moore sing. Through Sir John Stevenson she and Olivia got an

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invitation to a little musical party given by Mrs. Moore, the poet's mother, in a small room over the grocer's shop in Aungier Street. This room was compared to a harpsichord in size and shape. Moore was then the wonder of the day, the pet of princes and the friend of peers. He was dining out at the Provost's, and did not appear till late in the evening. "The two scrubby-headed, ill-dressed little girls," Sydney and Olivia, stood close by the piano. The first song was *Friend of My Soul.* Olivia's tears fell like dew. Moore bowed and sang again, *Will you come to the bower?* Then he rushed off to a party at the jolly, handsome Countess of Antrim's. But Sydney's soul was in a ferment; she even forgot to undress herself. The power of the songs was much, but the success of the grocer's son in Aungier Street was even more—it stimulated her to like efforts. *He* had shot up like a skyrocket, why might not *she?* To relieve her father was also another spur which urged her on. *St. Clair* was now finished, and one morning she borrowed the cook's cloak and bonnet and slipped out from Dominick Street with her MS. under her arm. She wandered on till she came to Henry Street, and saw "T. Smith, Printer and Bookseller," over the door. A dirty-faced boy was sweeping the shop, and sent the dust in her face. Then he flung down his brush, leaned his face on his hands, and said, "What do you plaize to want, miss?" "The gentleman of the house." "Which of them—ould or young?" A flashy young man whistling *The Irish Volunteers* now came in, and marched straight up to poor, confused Sydney. "Here's a young Miss wants to see yez, Masther James," said the impudent boy, and "Masther James" chucked the "young miss" under the chin, while she felt as if she could have murdered him. But a good-humoured middle-aged man, with his face half-shaved and a razor in his hand, came to the rescue, told the young volunteer to be off like a skyrocket, and asked the young lady to sit down. Then he returned with his face shaved,

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and wiping his hands in a towel, he said, "Now, honey, what can I do for you?" This was so utterly unlike Sydney's ideas of Tonson, Dodsley, and the great Miss Burney that she says she felt ready to cry. At last she stammered out—

"I want to sell a book, please."

"To sell a book, dear? An ould one? for I sell new ones myself," said Mr. Smith. "And what is the name of it, and what is it about?"

I was now, says Lady Morgan, occupied in taking off the rose-coloured ribbon with which I had tied my manuscript.

"What! it's a manuscript, is it?" cried Mr. Smith.

"The name, sir," I said, "is *St. Clair*."

"Well, now, my dear, I have nothing to do with church books, neither sermons nor tracts, do you see? I take it for granted it's a Papist book by the title."

"No, sir, it is one of sentiment, after the manner of Werther."

"Well, my dear, I never heard of Werther, and you see I am not a publisher of novels at all."

"Hot, hungry, flurried, and mortified," she continues, "I began to tie up my manuscript." In spite of myself the tears came into my eyes, and poor good-natured Mr. Smith said, "Don't cry, dear, there's money bid for you yet. But you're very young to be an author, and what's your name?" So Sydney told her name, and Mr. Smith declared that Mr. Owenson, of the Theatre Royal, was the greatest friend he had. "Will I recommend you to a publisher?" he asked. "Oh, sir, if you would be so good!" "To be sure I will." A letter to Mr. Brown, of Grafton Street, was dashed off, and away Sydney went. She was shown into a shop-parlour, where an elderly lady was making breakfast and a gentleman was reading. Mr. Smith's letter caused great bewilderment,

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but a promise was at length given that the MS. should be submitted to Mr. Brown's reader.

The Fetherstons and their governess returned to Bracklin, and during their next Dublin visit Sydney chanced to take up a book that was lying on a window-seat, and what was her amazement to find that it was her own *St. Clair!* She had left no address with the publisher, which was his excuse for silence; he now presented her with four copies of her book, and for some time this was all the remuneration she received. From her memoirs we learn that *St. Clair* was afterwards re-written and published in England; it was translated into German, with a preface which declared that the authoress had strangled herself with a cambric handkerchief in a fit of disappointed love. There is no fun, but plenty of sentiment and high-flown discussions on men and things; it shows, also, an amount of reading that one would hardly expect from volatile Sydney Owenson. She had an immense capacity, not so much for digesting knowledge as for swallowing it wholesale, and then pouring it forth on all occasions, even when her heroes were at their death-throes.

In 1801 Mr. Owenson settled at Coleraine, and Sydney, by his wish, left the Fetherstons to join him and Olivia. But life in lodgings must have been rather dingy and dull after the gaieties of Bracklin, and she soon settled herself in another situation in the family of Mr. Crawford, of Fort William, in the North of Ireland. Here, as usual, she was petted and caressed; she had the happy knack of making friends, of accepting kindnesses gracefully; then, too, she was a capital storyteller, and a real prize in a country house. "Here we are," she writes, "singing, playing, dancing away as merry as crickets. Last night finished with my Irish jig, in which I danced down my man completely, and was three times interrupted by plaudits in my song of *The Soldier Tired*." Yet with all these excitements she managed to write another novel, *The Novice of St. Dominic*, in six huge volumes, and one of her numerous admirers, Francis

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Crossley, performed the truly lover-like task of copying her hieroglyphics into plain legible handwriting. She resolved to bring this bulky parcel to London herself. In a newspaper she had seen the name of a publisher, Sir R. Phillips; she immediately wrote to him, and in his polite answer he speaks of her "ingenious and ingenuous letter, which portrays true genius."

A journey to London in those coaching days was no easy matter, and Sydney had not a well-filled purse to make things smooth. The coach drove into the yard of the "Swan with Two Necks," and the tired traveller sat down on her trunk to consider what she should do next. She soon fell sound asleep, and was given over to the care of the landlord. Next morning she took her MS. and set off to Sir R. Phillips. Publishers are usually supposed to be stony-hearted individuals, but this Irish siren threw a strange spell over hers. Sir R. Phillips introduced her to his wife, and though he insisted that *The Novice* must be reduced from six to four volumes, still he paid her for it, and awoke new courage and hope for the future. She bought an "Irish harp and a black mode cloak" out of her earnings, and with these treasures she returned to Londonderry. *The Novice* had a certain amount of success; we are told that it was a favourite with Mr. Pitt, who read it again during his last illness.

What with flirting, visiting the Croftons in Sligo, and writing *The Wild Irish Girl*, Sydney had now a busy time of it. *The Wild Irish Girl* was finished in 1806. Sharp after a good bargain, she offered it to Johnson, who promised £300 for it, while her friend Phillips had only promised £200 and £50 for every new edition. But "the dear bewitching and deluding siren" carried her point. Phillips agreed to her terms and gave her the £300 she asked. The story was based on an incident in her own harum-scarum life. A young man, Richard Everard, had fallen deeply in love with her; he had no money and no pro-

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fession ; his father called upon the dangerous Sydney, told her his objections, but fell into the same snare from which he wished to extricate his son. In the story these incidents are dressed out with titles ; the heroine is Glorvina, Princess of Innismore, and henceforth Sydney became known amongst her friends as "Glorvina" or "Glo."

The Wild Irish Girl was a "hit," and the authoress enjoyed her success with a *naïve* vanity which has its own charm. At Shrewsbury, where she went to stay with her mother's relations, she writes that she was carried about as a show and worshipped as a little idol. She had one serious flirtation, which lasted many years, with Sir Charles Ormsby, whom she describes as one of the "most brilliant wits, determined *roués*, and ugliest men in the world." But he was *criblé des dettes*, so, in spite of rings and letters, the affair came to nothing. She now began another novel, *Ida of Athens*, and studied maps and books with zeal and assiduity.

The year 1808 closed happily with the marriage of Olivia to a queer little physician, Dr. Clarke (afterwards knighted by the Lord-Lieutenant). Mr. Owenson went to live with the Clarkes, and Sydney was more than ever thrown on her own resources. Phillips and his siren did not agree about *Ida ;* there was "perilous stuff" in it, and yet it was accepted by Longman. Ida is not only a beauty and a genius, but a model of female uprightness ; what with her long arguments and tirades about Greece and liberty the pages were spun out, and had the doubtful honour of being "cut up" in the *Quarterly Review*.

An acquaintance now began which had a serious effect on Sydney Owenson's life ; she obtained the favour of the Marquis and Marchioness of Abercorn. The Marquis himself was a grand seigneur, handsome and courtly. At Baronscourt, in the North of Ireland, he kept up a semi-regal state ; he always sat down to dinner in his Star and Garter, and the housemaids were never allowed to touch his bed except in

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white kid gloves. The Marchioness was fickle and flighty, but good-natured, and really fond of Sydney, who became the *enfant gâtée* of the house. Still the wild Irish girl kept to her old simplicity, and never wore anything except a white muslin dress with a flower in her bosom ; her hair was dressed by passing a wet brush over her black curls.

Whilst at Baronscourt she finished her novel of *The Missionary*. The scene was laid in India, and she had diligently read up Indian subjects. A Spanish priest tries to convert a Brahmin priestess ; they fall in love and elope. This was the rather ridiculous framework. Every evening Sydney read out what she had written in the morning. The marquis told his "sweet Glo" that it was the greatest nonsense he had ever heard in his life, still he listened, but Lady Abercorn yawned most dismally. Nothing daunted, the authoress took it and herself to London. Here of course she fell on her feet. She stayed at Stanmore Priory, and Lord Castlereagh brought her to town in his chariot, and stood by while the agreement with Stockdale (a new publisher) was signed. A portrait from a painting by Sir T. Lawrence was the frontispiece. Gay, defiant, irresistible Sydney, with her black crop of curly hair and her saucy victorious eyes, is given to the life. Her position was a dangerous one. Poor and vain, admired by many, envied by others, she often played with fire, and yet came out unharmed.

Lady Abercorn was now bent on making up a match between her favourite physician, Dr. Morgan, and her favourite *protégée*, Sydney Owenson. Dr. Morgan was not an old fogey ; he was a widower, but rather younger than the wild Irish girl—handsome and distinguished in his profession. He was English, and had a shy dislike to encounter the siren. But his destiny had come to him, and he fell hopelessly in love with saucy Glorvina. She liked love-making ; she accepted him, but did not relish the idea of matrimony. Before settling down she insisted on going

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to her friends in Dublin, while Dr. Morgan remained at Baronscourt and wrote piteous letters to his "dearest love," his "sweetest life." "I have no love for any but you," he says: "you have my whole, whole heart. You are never less interesting to me than when you *brillez* at a large party. When you are true to nature, passionate and tender, then I adore you." Presently he gets jealous; he has heard of the attentions of a certain Mr. Parkhurst. "Am I not worthy of your confidence?" he writes. "Oh, God! oh, God! my poor lacerated heart!" Then Sydney clears herself, and the doctor confesses that he has been "most unjust, most ungenerous, and that he is a *beast*." His ladylove sometimes gives him a little flattery. "Nothing takes a woman like mind in a man," she says. "When you talk *en philosophe* to me I adore you; when you make bad puns and are 'put in mind' I hate you." She declares that if she does marry the doctor, she will make him the "dearest, best, and funniest little wife in the world."

At length she returned to Baronscourt, and Dr. Morgan was quite convinced that her conduct had been admirable. Lady Abercorn insisted that there must be no more trifling. Glorvina was ordered to come upstairs directly and be married, so the chaplain performed the ceremony, and Sir Charles (for the doctor had been knighted shortly before) won the fickle Irish siren. The marriage turned out most happily. Sir Charles had good sense and patience to bear with his wife's whims and oddities. She had a great respect for his abilities, and his assistance in her literary work was invaluable. Her best novels were written after her marriage, when she had the advantage of his sober judgment and advice. Though firm and truthful, he was naturally of an indolent disposition, and his energetic wife was always stirring him up. The first year of married life was spent at Baronscourt, but Lady Morgan soon wearied of borrowed grandeur. A house in Dublin, at Kildare Street, was taken, and she was soon busy converting her "piggery into a clean,

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comfortable abode." Before her marriage she had earned five thousand pounds, which was settled on herself, and during the Kildare Street days she wrote *O'Donnel*, a picture of Irish scenes and Irish people, which is one of her best efforts. The heroine, Miss O'Halloran, the brusque governess, who afterwards becomes the brilliant Duchess of Belmont, is a well-sustained character; and the fickle Lady Llanberis, capricious in her fancies and wearying of the very thing that had charmed her a minute before, is a study from life for which Lady Abercorn unconsciously sat. *O'Donnel* has many faults; it is extravagant, but it is original and striking, and shows a knowledge of fashionable life. It was published by Colburn, and £550 was paid for the copyright.

Lady Morgan's next move was to Paris. The battle of Waterloo was over, and much that was new could be said of the France of 1816. The *succès de société* which she enjoyed in this congenial capital, the *fêtes* and compliments which she was paid, nearly turned her brain. Her work on France made a sensation, and she received £1,000 for it, though the *Quarterly Review* dubbed it "an impudent lie!" She revenged herself on Croker by putting him into her next novel, *Florence M'Carthy*, which, notwithstanding the confused and absurd plot, has some capital Irish scenes. The Crawley family are drawn with a firm and vivid touch. Lady Morgan was too fond of political hobbies to be a really good novelist. She loved to enlarge on Catholic emancipation, penal laws, and the like, but the readers of that day were not disposed to be over-critical, and they swallowed the physic of politics for the sake of the sugar of the story. Lady Morgan hated the commonplace; she loved mystery and melodrama. Her heroine, Florence M'Carthy, is always starting up in unexpected places and strange disguises. Colburn was so delighted at the proofs of *Florence M'Carthy* that we are told he rushed off and bought a beautiful parure of amethysts for the lucky authoress.

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She and Sir Charles now visited Italy, and of course a book on that country soon followed. For this Colburn gave what Lady Morgan calls the "paltry sum of £2,000!" Lord Byron called it a "fearless and excellent book," and it had a large sale. Some of the chapters on medical science were written by Sir Charles.

The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa was Lady Morgan's next book. She took great pains with it, and really studied her subject. She says that she enjoyed writing it more than any of her other books, and in connection with it she had many letters from the celebrated Lady Caroline Lamb.

The O'Briens and O'Flaherties was another success, and contains some of her best comic writing. Meanwhile her house at Kildare Street was the focus for all that was bright and sparkling in talent and Liberal in politics. She was a capital hostess. At her parties Moore sometimes sang, and once she did not think it *infra dig.* to step down to the kitchen and superintend the dinner. "I dressed half the dinner myself," she says, "which everybody allowed was supreme, particularly my *matelotte d'anguille* and my *dinde farci à la daube!* It matters little how great dinners are dressed, but small ones should be exquisite." In one of the popular rhymes sung about the streets Lady Morgan is thus alluded to:—

> "O Dublin city, there is no doubtin',
> Bates every city upon the say,
> 'Tis there you'll hear O'Connell spoutin',
> And Lady Morgan making tay."

The Book of the Boudoir, a collection of scraps and short essays, was published in 1829, and was bitterly reviewed in *Blackwood.* All Lady Morgan's worst faults, her carelessness, her inaccuracy, her vanity, her errors in taste and spelling, were held up to ridicule. A second work on France was now prepared, but in an evil hour Lady Morgan took affront with Colburn, and offered it to Saunders and

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Otley. A thousand pounds was to be given for the copyright, and more for succeeding editions, but the day after the book appeared, all the newspapers had the advertisement, *Lady Morgan at Half-price*, and it was announced that Mr. Colburn was ready to sell all Lady Morgan's previous works at half-price. A great loss consequently ensued on the second *France*, though it really was the best of the two.

This was the last notable work Lady Morgan wrote. But her success in society was as great as ever, and London was her special delight. She was fond of quoting some words which Leigh Hunt made on her at this time :—

> "And dear Lady Morgan, see ! see ! when she comes,
> Her pulses all beating for freedom like drums,
> So Irish, so mixtish, so modish, so wild,
> So committing herself when she talks like a child,
> So trim yet so easy, polite yet high-hearted,
> That Truth and she—try all she can—won't be parted,
> She'll put on your fashions, your latest new air,
> And then talk so frankly she'll make you all stare."

"I am so fussed and fidgeted by my dear charming world," she writes in her *Diary*, and then she adds that, *sans vanité*, she is the best-dressed woman wherever she goes. "Last night, at Lady Stepney's, I wore a blue satin, trimmed fully with magnificent point lace, and stomacher *à la* Sévigné, light blue velvet hat and feather, and an aigrette of diamonds and sapphires." And plenty of rouge, she might have added. "Hardly more than four feet high," says one who saw her in Dublin, "with a slightly curved spine, uneven shoulders and eyes, Lady Morgan glided about in a close-cropped wig, bound by a fillet of gold, her face all animation, and with a witty word for every one. I afterwards saw her at the dress circle of the theatre. She was cheered enthusiastically. A red Celtic cloak, fastened by a rich gold fibulæ or Irish tara brooch, imparted to her little ladyship a gorgeous and withal picturesque appearance."

In 1837 she was granted a Government pension of £300 a year, and she persuaded Sir Charles to leave Dublin (this

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"wretched capital of a wretched country,") and take a house in London. Sir Charles died in 1843, greatly to the grief of his volatile wife, who really loved him, and could never bear to speak of her loss. Still she went to parties and gave them; she rouged and joked, and brought out her "harmonious nieces"—the Miss Clarkes. But death came at last. After a musical party on St. Patrick's Day, 1859, she caught cold and died on the 16th April in the same year. Her last book was *Woman and her Master*, written when her sight was failing just before her husband's death. She and Sir Charles had been constant contributors to the *New Monthly Magazine*.

We must credit Lady Morgan with a great deal of brilliancy, originality, and independence of character. She attempted a great many things; she danced, played on the harp, sang, wrote, cooked, talked, and she did all with a dash and an ease that was her special gift. There is a saying that it is better to be born lucky than rich, and it is certain that people with as much talent as Lady Morgan have failed to attain the same success. This Christmas-born being had what may be called "go," and she had also immense luck. She was lucky in her publishers, in her friends, in her husband, in the way her books took, in the time they came out, in the amazing prices she got for them. While Miss Austen only received a few hundreds for her inimitable novels, Lady Morgan counted her profits by thousands and thousands. She not only had a "gude conceit" of herself, but she persuaded other people to have the same. By a happy combination of circumstances she heard herself called "Lady," which tickled her ears and pleased her vanity. In short, the daring, careless, inaccurate, *insouciante* "Glorvina" had the fairy secret of success, though people of the present day may stare at the verdict that once pronounced her a genius.

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XIV.

SUSAN EDMONSTONE FERRIER.

1782–1854.

Odd people—The Ferriers—Birth of Susan at "Lady Stair's Close"—Talent for mimicry—Visit to Inverary Castle—*Marriage*—*The Inheritance*—The Black family—*Destiny*—Last visit to Abbotsford—Failure of eyesight—Death.

DURING the last ninety years, we must all admit that a vast improvement has taken place in the writing of novels. The stilted and artificial language which delighted our forefathers has long ago disappeared. Even ordinary stories are more coherent and better put together than some of the best novels of former days, the descriptions are more graphic and picturesque, and the conversations more easy and natural; and yet those who wrote novels ninety years ago had one immense advantage over us—they had a large mine of materials to draw from, which is now almost exhausted. Odd people, full of strange eccentricities in dress, conversation, and habits, were then constantly to be found, and supplied a stock of comedy which we cannot expect to see in these modern times of rapid travelling, penny postage, and cheap literature. Our friends are now ashamed of being peculiar, and the sharp corners of even the most inveterate stayer at home gradually become fined down and smoothed away. Far different was it in the beginning of the nineteenth century;

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then queer folks were as plenty as blackberries—fire-eating squires, primitive spinsters, Scotch lairds who had never gone beyond their own county, abounded. Such a harvest was an irresistible temptation to a novelist; it was impossible not to put these human curiosities into a book and show them up with all their foibles and hobbies fresh upon them. Miss Burney had already given some startling types in Madame Duval, the Broughtons, and Mr. Briggs; Maria Edgeworth followed suit with Sir Kit and Sir Condy, Lady Clonbrony and King Corny of the Black Islands. Sir Walter Scott brought up a host of oddities—Jonathan Oldbuck, Dominie Sampson, Meg Dods, Old Mortality, &c., &c.; while Miss Ferrier came closely on his track, and confining herself to her native Scotland, introduced us to the family at Glenfern Castle, to the three aunts, Miss Jacky, Miss Grizzy, and Miss Nicky, together with their five nieces, Belle, Becky, Betty, Baby, and Beeny, tall frightened girls with sandy hair and great purple arms—girls whose "walk lay amongst threads and pickles, and whose sphere extended from the garret to the pantry." Miss Ferrier's special talent lay in representing the life of Scottish lairds and their families, during the transition period of their history, when the age of half-savage chivalry, of midnight forays and border warfare, was over, and when Highland chieftains were fast dwindling down into imitation squires. In the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of Christopher North (Professor Wilson) there is a very interesting conversation on Miss Ferrier's novels. Tickler says: "They have no doubt many defects: their plots are poor, their episodes disproportionate, and the characters too often caricatures, but they are all thick-set with such specimens of sagacity, such happy traits of nature, such flashes of genuine satire, such easy humour and sterling good sense, and, above all (God knows where she picked it up), perfect knowledge of the world, that I think we may safely anticipate for them a different fate than what awaits even the cleverest of juvenile novels." Miss Ferrier has

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been called the Scotch Jane Austen ; but life in the Highlands, which she described so well, had broader shades and stronger lights than we find in the English shires with Miss Austen's Thorpes, and Bennetts, and Elliots. Inch Orran, the Scotch laird in *Destiny*, a "little meagre sickly-looking man with a sharp, bitter face, a pair of fiery, vindictive eyes, and a mouth all puckered up as if to keep in the many cutting things which would otherwise get out," is a more dramatic sketch than Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, not perhaps so delicately finished, but full of satire and strength. Miss Ferrier's satire is more cutting than Jane Austen's ; her writing is not so uniformly good, but it has capital bits. The inimitable Miss Pratt, who will even take advantage of an empty hearse to bring her to Rossville Castle out of a snowstorm, the faithful though sorely-snubbed Molly Macaulay, and testy Uncle Adam, are all vivid pictures of Scotch character, which we cannot afford to lose. A few glimpses are all we can get of Susan Ferrier's quiet life ; such as they are, we give them here :—

Mr. James Ferrier, Writer to the Signet, and his wife, lived in a flat of one of those gigantic houses in the old town of Edinburgh, which seems overflowing with romance and history. In this house, at "Lady Stair's Close," ten children, six sons and four daughters, were born. Susan was the youngest daughter, and her birthday was the 7th of September, 1782. The Ferriers were not rich, but they had a tolerable pedigree. Mr. Ferrier's father had been the last laird of Kirklands in Renfrew, a property subsequently sold to Lord Blantyre ; and Mrs. Ferrier, *née* Coutts, had been a celebrated beauty, and before her marriage, lived at Holyrood Palace with her aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Maitland, widow of a younger son of Lord Lauderdale. Mrs. Maitland was badly off, and had charge of the apartments at Holyrood, which then belonged to the Duke of Argyll. But Mr. Ferrier was even more mixed up with the Argyll family than his wife : he had been brought up in the office of his

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cousin, Mr. Archibald Campbell, and in time became the manager of the Argyll estates, and was appointed Principal Clerk of the Sessions. John, Duke of Argyll, was always Mr. Ferrier's friend and patron, and helped him on in the world in various ways.

Mr. Ferrier is described as somewhat brusque and testy in manner, and was the unconscious prototype of Uncle Adam in *The Inheritance*—"as cross as two sticks," and full of biting sarcasms for his niece, Bell, who has designs on his pocket. After years perhaps smoothed down the asperities of Mr. Ferrier's temper. His daughter Susan was really fond of him, and proved the stay and comfort of his old age; but while his children were young he was certainly a bugbear to them, as will be seen by the following anecdote, which also shows Susan's early talent for mimicry:—One evening her brothers and sisters returned home from a ball very hungry, and took refuge in her bedroom. They supposed that she was asleep, and began talking over the events of the evening, while at the same time they discussed a nice little supper which, unknown to their father, they had smuggled upstairs. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant"—so, no doubt, they found; but just as the feast was at its height an alarm was given, the dreaded sound of Mr. Ferrier's loud voice was heard scolding and storming in the lobby outside. Away flew the culprits, upsetting chairs and tables in their confusion, while little Susan chuckled to herself under the bedclothes, for it was she who had so successfully imitated the harsh accents of her irate father. She considered that her brothers and sisters had richly deserved their fright, for not only had they invaded her territory, but had never offered her a share of their supper. She also mimicked old Miss Peggy Campbell (sister to Sir Islay Campbell, President of the Court of Session) so exactly, that her father actually came into the room where she was amusing her hearers, thinking that Miss Peggy had certainly arrived.

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Among her school companions and playfellows was the great Lord Brougham, but school-going does not seem to have occupied much of her time. Her three sisters married early, and at the age of fifteen she lost her mother. In the same year (1797) she went with her father to pay her first visit at Inverary Castle, the Duke of Argyll's place on the banks of Loch Fyne. A girl's first friendship is almost as important an event in her life as her first love. So it proved with Susan Ferrier. Among the numerous visitors at Inverary Castle was a very beautiful and elegant little girl, Miss Clavering, daughter of Lady Augusta Clavering, and niece to the Duke of Argyll. The two young ladies immediately struck up a never-dying attachment. Susan Ferrier wanted a companion, and Miss Clavering was lively and animated. There was, besides, so much to amuse and observe at the Castle, that by dint of laughing and joking the two friends became inseparable. Inverary Castle was the great rallying point for the clan Campbell. Red-haired, high cheek-boned Highland chieftains, sneezing, snuffing, and anathematising everything that was not Scotch, came and went every day. Lady Frederick Campbell, widow of Earl Ferrers, and original of Lady MacLaughlan in *Marriage*, was there, with her thousand and one ointments, lotions, and cough tinctures; the three Miss Edmonstones, one of whom was Susan Ferrier's god-mother, probably put in an appearance, and unwittingly sat for their portraits as the three Miss Douglasses in *Marriage*. Then there were plenty of silly, selfish fashionable ladies from London—like Lady Juliana Douglas and Lady Elizabeth Malcolm—who favoured the Duke with a visit, bringing with them their parrots, lap-dogs, macaws, and physicians. Such a collection of human curiosities was not thrown away upon Susan Ferrier and her friend; they laughed over their bedroom fires at the many amusing things they had heard and seen during the day, and at last Miss Clavering said, "Why don't you make a book of them?" During subsequent visits this

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plan matured, and Miss Clavering promised to help. Each was to write a few pages, then show it to the other, and consult about further progress. All this was to be done under the pledge of profound secrecy, and so the first idea of *Marriage* originated.

The two friends wrote long letters about their new undertaking. Plot they had little or none, but they had plenty of actors, drawn or suggested from real life, and fitting scenes lay close at hand. Dunderawe Castle, on Loch Fyne, was in Susan Ferrier's mind when she drew the sketch of Glenfern Castle—a tall, thin, grey house, with a small sallow-looking lake below, and behind, a chain of rugged, cloud-capped hills, with some faint attempts at plantation on them.

"I do not recollect," she writes to her *confidante*, "ever to have seen the sudden transition of a high-bred English beauty (Lady Juliana) who thinks she can sacrifice all for love, to an uncomfortable solitary Highland dwelling, among tall, red-haired sisters and grim-faced aunts. Don't you think this would make a good opening for the piece? Suppose each of us try our hand on it? The moral being to warn all young ladies against runaway matches. I expect it will be the first book every wise matron will put into the hands of her daughter, and even the reviewers will relax of their severity in favour of the morality of the little work. Enchanting sight! Already do I behold myself arrayed in an old mouldy covering, thumbed and creased and filled with dog's-ears. I hear the enchanting sound of some sentimental miss, the shrill pipe of some antiquated spinster, or the hoarse grumbling of some incensed dowager, as they severally inquire for me at the circulating libraries, and are assured by the master that 'tis in such demand, that though he has thirteen copies, they are quite insufficient to answer the call upon it, but that each of them may depend upon having the very first that comes in!!! Child, child, you had need to be sensible of the value of my correspondence. At this moment I'm squandering mines of wealth upon you, when I

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might be drawing treasures from the bags of time. But I shall not repine, if you'll only repay me in kind. Speedy and long is all that I require. . . . One thing let me entreat of you: if we engage in this undertaking, let it be kept a profound secret from every human being. If I was suspected of being accessory to such foul deeds, my brothers and sisters would murder me, and my father bury me alive."

One great difficulty the friends had to struggle against was the expense of postage—no trifling matter in those days. "I suppose," writes Susan Ferrier, in her usual bright, lively style, "that we'll be pawning our flannel-petticoats to bring about our heroine's marriage, and lying on straw to give her Christian burial." Very soon, however, Miss Clavering was left out of the running, the only part of *Marriage* to which she can lay any claim being that dull and prosy chapter called "The History of Mrs. Douglas." Nevertheless, she was quite willing to appreciate her friend's superior talents. She writes from Inverary Castle, December, 1810 :—

"And now, my dear Susannah, I must tell you of the success of your firstborn. I read it to Lady Charlotte, in the carriage, when she and I came from Ardnacaple. I never, in my existence, saw Lady C—— laugh so much as she did from beginning to end; seriously, I was two or three times afraid she would fall into a fit. Her words were, 'I assure you, I think it without the least exception the cleverest thing that was ever written, and in wit far surpassing Fielding.' The whole conversation of the aunties made her screech with laughing. I am sure you will be the first author of the age."

The book was still in MS., and Susan Ferrier began to feel twinges of remorse lest some of her friends might recognise their portraits, Lady MacLaughlan in particular. "If I was ever to be detected, or even suspected," she writes to Miss Clavering, "I would have nothing for it but to drown

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myself." But her *confidante* wrote back that it must all go forth into the world. "You must not think of altering Lady MacLaughlan, neither must the 'misses' on any account be changed. . . . Make haste and print it, lest one of the Miss Edmonstones should die, as then I should think you would scarce venture for fear of being haunted." Yet Miss Ferrier was in no hurry to rush into print. Years passed, and *Marriage* still peacefully slumbered on in MS. During the autumn of 1811 she went with her father on a visit to Sir Walter Scott, who was then at Ashestiel. The journey was attended with some difficulty. Though Ashestiel was only thirty miles from Edinburgh, still the coach stopped ten miles off, and a ford beneath Ashestiel had to be crossed :— "Generally very passable," writes Sir Walter, then Mr. Scott, to his brother of the Signet ; "but we will have a boat in readiness, in case Miss Ferrier prefers it, or the water should be full." Dinner was to be at five o'clock. Terry, the comedian, was on a visit to Ashestiel, and "read aloud to us," says Scott, "after coffee in the evening." We catch a pleasant glimpse of the little party assembled round the fire, on the October evening, the Ferriers just arrived, Scott full of vigour and anecdote, and Susan Ferrier quick to note and observe all that passed.

It was not till 1819, when she was thirty-seven, that she gave *Marriage* to the world. She received £150 for it, and when it began to be successful, no one was so much astonished as she was herself. In a subsequent preface she says, "It was published in the belief that the author's name would never be guessed at, or the work heard of beyond a very limited sphere." Her friends may have had their suspicions as to the authorship of the book, but they were obliged to be silent. Even Scott—the great unknown (for his secret had not yet oozed out)—alludes to *Marriage* in his preface to one of the *Tales of my Landlord* as follows :— "There remains not only a great harvest [of Scotch manners and character] but labourers capable of gathering it in. More

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than one writer has of late displayed talents of this description, and if the present author, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother, or perhaps a *sister-shadow*, he would mention in particular the author of that very lively work entitled *Marriage*." There are many serious faults in this notable novel; too many characters that have nothing to do with the story are introduced. The interest, which begins with silly, selfish Lady Juliana who runs away with a handsome Scotch captain, and is disgusted to find herself in a dull Highland castle, where there is not even loaf-bread, where she is half-poisoned with coarse Scotch broth, swimming with leeks, greens, and grease, where she is deafened by bagpipes and bewildered with aunts and sisters-in-law—is very soon diverted from her to her twin daughters, and especially to the Scotch-bred lassie, Mary, who finally ends by marrying a Scotchman. Of course, such a blissful lot favourably contrasts with that of her sister Adelaide, who captivates a prosy, solemn English duke. A change of heroines is always confusing; one generation is enough for a book, and a story that begins with the mother and ends with the daughters is a mistake which only the supreme excellence of Miss Ferrier's "oddities" can redeem. Blunt Lady MacLaughlan, good at heart, but always administering personalities and rude speeches to her little husband, Sir Sampson, and to her friend, Miss Grizzy, is enough to keep any story going.

Notwithstanding the success of her first book, Miss Ferrier was slow in writing another. Popular authors, nowadays, think nothing of running up a story in a few months, but Miss Ferrier was six years putting her second novel—*The Inheritance*—into form and shape. She wrote it in secret, at Morningside House, old Mr. Ferrier's summer retreat, near Edinburgh, and complained that the house was so small, it was very ill-calculated for concealment. She still wished to keep her light under a bushel, and said, "I never will avow myself, and nothing can hurt or offend me so much as any

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of my friends doing it for me. I could not bear the fuss of authorism." *The Inheritance* was considered a hundred miles above *Marriage*, and Blackwood gave £1,000 for it. In *The Inheritance* Miss Pratt takes the comic part, which Lady MacLaughlan took in *Marriage*. Miss Pratt is a real creation—"the very ribbons on her bonnet seemed to vibrate with impatience;" she forced herself in everywhere, often uninvited, interrupted the Earl of Rossville in his stateliest speeches, and made herself at home wherever she went.

"Everybody wearied of her, or said they wearied of her, and everybody abused her, while yet she was more sought after and asked about than she would have been had she possessed the wisdom of a More or the benevolence of a Fry. She was, in fact, the very heart of the shire, and gave life and energy to all the pulses of the parish. She supplied it with streams of gossip and chit-chat in others and subject of ridicule in herself. Even the dullest laird had something to tell of Miss Pratt, and something bad to say of her. Her eyes were not by any means fine eyes—they were not reflecting eyes—they were not soft eyes—they were not melting eyes—neither were they restless eyes, nor rolling eyes, but they were active, brisk, busy, vigilant, immovable eyes, that looked as if they could not be surprised by anything, not even by sleep. They never looked angry, or joyous, or perturbed, or melancholy, or heavy, but morning, noon, and night they shone the same, and conveyed the same impression to the beholder, viz., that they were eyes that had a look—not like the look of Sterne's monk, beyond this world, but a look into all things on the face of this world. Her ears might evidently be classed under the same head with the eyes; they were something resembling rabbits'—long, prominent, restless, vibrating ears, for ever listening and never shut by the power of thought."

The story of *The Inheritance* is better imagined, and has a stronger plot than that of *Marriage*.

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Gertrude St. Clair, supposed to be the heiress of her uncle, Lord Rossville, is brought by her mother to live at the Earl's castle. The Earl is a petty, benevolent tyrant, full of little thoughts, little plans, little notions, little prejudices, little whims. He sits "behind the teapot like a cackling hen," so Miss Pratt says, and his firm determination is that Gertrude should marry Mr. Delmour, the next heir-male to the Rossville estates. But Gertrude, of course, falls in love with the wrong man—with Mr. Delmour's brother, the colonel. Just as the confusion caused by this obstinacy is at its height, the Earl dies, and Gertrude finds herself a countess. Yet all the time a mysterious, vulgar individual called Levitson keeps hovering about demanding money. In the end he forces himself into the Castle and announces that he is in reality Gertrude's father, that she is the daughter of a nurse, whom her mother, having no children, has passed off as her own. Colonel Delmour immediately decamps at the news. Gertrude loses her "Inheritance," but only to find another, as she is taken up by testy Uncle Adam with his £70,000, and at length marries Edward Lyndsay, an excellent but rather mild young man.

There are even more comic scenes in *The Inheritance* than in *Marriage*. There is the Black family, eleven in all. The young masters and misses, "fine, stout, blooming, awkward creatures with shining faces and straight-combed, though rebellious-looking hair, while a smart cap, red eyes, and sour face bespoke the sufferings of the baby." The eldest, Miss Bell Black, is soon to be Mrs. Major Waddell.

"Miss Bell had no toilette duties to perform, for she was dressed for the Major, in a fashionable gown made by Miss Skrimpskirt, of Tattleton, from a pattern of Miss Gorewell's, in Edinburgh, who has had hers direct from Madame Chef-d'œuvre, of Paris. Miss Bell, therefore, felt no disheartening doubts as to her appearance, but firmly relying on the justness of her proportions and the orthodox length of her waist,

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and breadth of her shoulders, and strong in the consciousness of being flounced and hemmed up to the knees, she boldly entered, followed by her betrothed. Major Waddell was a very *passable* sort of person for a nabob. He had a dingy bronze complexion, tawny eyes, tolerable teeth, and a long wrinkled baboonish physiognomy."

Miss Bell, when she develops into Mrs. Major Waddell, becomes still more ridiculous.

"'Oh! now, Major, you know if you haven't changed your stockings, I shall be completely wretched. Good gracious! to think of your keeping on your wet stockings. I never knew anything like it.'

"'I assure you, my dear Bell——' began the Major.

"'Oh? now, my dearest Major, if you have the least regard for me, I beseech you put off your stockings this minute. Oh! I'm certain you've got cold already. How hot you are!' taking his hand; 'and don't you think his colour very high? Now, I'm quite wretched about you.'"

Such a scene must surely have been a study from life. *The Inheritance* was translated into French under the title of *L'Heretière*. It was also dramatised and produced at Covent Garden, but had a very short run. "I have since learned with regret," writes Mrs. Gore to Miss Ferrier, "that the play is the production of a certain Mr. Fitzball, the author of *The Flying Dutchman*." Miss Pratt ought certainly have done well on the stage.

Old Mr. Ferrier died at his house, 25, George Street, Edinburgh, January, 1829, aged eighty-six, and after his death his daughter removed to a smaller house in Nelson Street. She was always welcome at Sir Walter Scott's town-house in George Street, and Fanny Kemble mentions having met her at breakfast there. Sir Walter personally liked Miss Ferrier. He had known her as a girl, and their intimacy has ripened into friendship. He calls her a gifted personage, having, besides her great talents, conversation the least *exigeante*

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of any author, male or female, that I have ever met. She is simple, full of humour, and exceedingly ready at *repartee*, and all this without the least affectation of the "blue-stocking." *Destiny*, Miss Ferrier's third novel, was dedicated to Scott, and he writes: "I know a little the value of my future god-child, since I had a peep at some of the sheets when I was in town during a great snowstorm. So far, I must say, that what I have seen has had the greatest effect in making me curious for the rest." Great part of *Destiny* was written at Stirling Castle, where Miss Ferrier was on a visit with her sister Jane, Mrs. Graham, whose husband, General Graham, was governor of the garrison. Amidst the romantic surroundings of Stirling, with the winding Forth twisting in and out, Susan Ferrier's thoughts went back to her favourite Argyleshire, and she imagined the Highland chief, Glenroy, proud, prejudiced, and profuse, with his never-failing friend and companion, sleepy-headed and absent Benbowie, who chewed tobacco, slobbered when he ate, walked up and down with a pair of creaking shoes, and drummed upon the table with a snuffy hand. The elegant and fastidious Lady Elizabeth, Glenroy's second wife, and widow of an English Honourable, cannot banish Benbowie; and, after a short trial of the Highlands, she and her beautiful little girl, Florinda, take their departure. Glenroy's two children, Norman and Edith, together with their cousin, Reginald, grow up together. Edith was put under the care of Mrs. Molly Macaulay, "who was one of those happily-constituted beings who seem to have been born *sans* nerves, *sans* spleen, *sans* bile, *sans* everything of an irritable or acrimonious nature, but with all these wants there was no want of a heart, a good stout, sound, warm heart, which would cheerfully have given itself and its last drop for the honour and glory of the race of Glenroy."

Destiny will have it that Edith and Reginald, brought up together, should become attached. Destiny, too, decrees that Reginald should meet his former playfellow, Florinda,

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on the Continent, and that she should banish simple Scotch Edith from his thoughts. Destiny ordains that Reginald's struggles against his infatuation for the fascinating Florinda, who, with her mother, suddenly appears at Glenroy Castle, should be in vain, and in spite of his sense of honour, Edith sees herself supplanted. The old chief's obstinacy for the match is all in vain, and Edith, an orphan, finds a retreat in a little vulgar citizen's box near London, where Mr. Ribley watches the poulterers' and butchers' boys going their rounds, and speculates on the scrag of mutton for Miss Mudge and the noble sirloin for Mr. Claridge. *Destiny*, after all, has a happy ending, for Edith finds her fate in her cousin Ronald, who was supposed to have been lost at sea, and was left an estate by the testy old chief, Inch Orran. The scene in the early part of the book, when Ronald returns, finds his parents enjoying the estate, supposing him to be dead, and resolves to conceal his existence, is a touch of pathos which Professor Wilson considers worthy of Sterne or Goldsmith. "Generally," he says, "Miss Ferrier fails almost as egregiously as Hook does in the pathetic. She appears habitually in the light of a hard satirist; but there is always a fund of romance at the bottom of a true woman's heart." *Destiny* was Miss Ferrier's greatest pecuniary success. By Sir Walter Scott's influence, it was published by Cadell, who gave her £1,700 for it. Praise flowed in from all sides—from Joanna Baillie, who found the Scotch minister, Mr. MacDow, hateful, though very amusing; and from Sir J. Mackintosh, who, on the day of the dissolution of Parliament, between twelve and three, was employed in reading the second volume, and was so completely occupied in the colony at Argyleshire, that he did not throw away a thought on kings or Parliament. Fanny Kemble also notes in her Diary: "Finished Miss Ferrier's novel of *Destiny*, which I like very much. Besides being very clever, it leaves a pleasant taste in one's mind's mouth." It was some time after the publication of *Destiny* that Miss Ferrier went to Abbots-

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ford to cheer and amuse Sir Walter Scott during his failing years. In Lockhart's *Life of Scott* we find the following :—

"His daughter had invited his friend, the authoress of *Marriage* to come out to Abbotsford ; and her coming was serviceable, for she knew and loved him well, and she had seen enough of affliction akin to his to be well skilled in dealing with it. She could not be an hour in his company without observing what filled his children with more sorrow than the rest of the case. He would begin a story as gaily as ever, and go on, in spite of the hesitation in his speech, to tell it with highly picturesque effect ; but, before he reached the point, it would seem as if some internal spring had given way ; he paused and gazed around him with the blank anxiety that a blind man has when he has dropped his staff. Unthinking friends would give him the catchword abruptly. I noticed the delicacy of Miss Ferrier on such occasions. Her sight was bad, and she took care not to use her glasses when he was speaking ; and she affected also to be troubled with deafness, and would say, 'Well, I am getting as deaf as a post ; I have not heard a word since you said so-and-so,' being sure to mention a circumstance behind that at which he had really halted. He then took up the thread with his habitual smile of courtesy, as if forgetting his own case entirely in the consideration of the lady's infirmity."

Such little traits show rare tact and unselfishness. Miss Ferrier had a deep sense of religion along with a chastened resignation to the ills of life. The world seemed to her, as she says in *Destiny*, "no bower of paradise, but something better, the abode of faith and hope." Many pages in her novels, which most readers skip for the sake of the story, show that religion had become a part of herself. After 1831 she wrote no more. A London publisher offered £1,000 for anything from her pen ; but she was contented with her three bantlings. She made two attempts to write something, but could not please herself, and would not publish

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anything. During her later days she lived a very retired life, only seeing her intimate friends. For years she suffered with her eyes, and became quite blind of one. "I can say nothing good of myself," she writes; "my cough is very severe, and will probably continue so—at least, as long as this weather lasts; but I have many comforts, for which I am thankful. Amongst them I must reckon silence and darkness, which are my best companions at present." A friend who visited her was astonished at her wonderful vivacity in the midst of the darkness and pain which she had suffered for so many years. She had so much wit, humour, and honesty of character, as well as Christian submission, that everybody who knew her tried to do something to alleviate the tedium of her days. One friend, who read aloud to her, said, "I never left her darkened chamber without feeling that I had gained something better than the book we might be reading, from her quick perception of its faults and beauties, and her unmerciful remarks on all that was mean or unworthy in conduct or expression."

Miss Ferrier died in 1854, aged seventy-two. Scotch, thoroughly Scotch to her finger-tips, we can hardly imagine Susan Ferrier out of Scotland. She went to London in 1831, to consult an oculist, and also paid a visit to Isleworth in order to see a villa belonging to Lord Casilis, which subsequently figures in *Destiny* as Lady Waldegrave's rural retreat near London, and there her wanderings ended. The land of brown heath was always most congenial to her. "Scotland," she says, "with all its faults, will ever be to its own children the land of our love, our father's home." And Scotch people may well be proud of Susan Ferrier. She has not flattered them, certainly; she has put them down as she found them to be, with their faults and their virtues, their crotchets and their prejudices; and yet with that strong, sturdy independence and true-heartedness, which, in spite of individual exceptions, make the Scotch nation what it has proved itself to be.

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XV.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

1787–1855.

Birth at Alresford—The lottery prize—At school at Hans Place—Bertram House—In want of bread—Writing tragedies—The *Foscari*—*Our Village*—The cottage at Three-Mile Cross—*Rienzi*—Dr. Mitford's debts—Charles Kingsley—James Payn—Death at Swallowfield.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD, the genial authoress of *Our Village*, was the only child of a Hampshire heiress and an extravagant young physician. There was a great disparity, not only in fortune, but in years, between the couple. Miss Russell had been left alone in the world with £28,000 in money, besides houses and lands; Dr. Mitford had nothing but good looks and an easy sort of good humour to recommend him. Miss Russell was plain in person and in her thirty-sixth year when the marriage took place, while Dr. Mitford was only twenty-five. Their daughter was born at Alresford on the 16th of December, 1787 (her biographers say), but her own words are "1788, in which year, at a quarter before ten at night, I had the honour to be born." She soon became a petted idol with both parents. Though not a pretty child, she was extremely precocious, and could read Whig newspapers at three years of age. In her *Recollections of a Literary Life* she tells how her father used to perch her on the breakfast-table to

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exhibit her one accomplishment to his friends, who admired her all the more because "she was a funny child, appearing younger than she was, and gifted with an affluence of curls, which made her look as if she were twin sister to her own great doll." Her favourite reading was *Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, and the breakfast-room, where she first possessed herself of these beloved ballads, was, she says, "a lofty and spacious apartment, literally lined with books, which, with its glowing fire, its sofas and easy-chairs, seemed a very nest of English comfort. The windows opened on a large old-fashioned garden, full of old-fashioned flowers, stocks, honeysuckles, and pinks." Flowers and gardens early became her favourite hobby. She enthusiastically describes the country rambles of her childhood in one of her early poems :—

> "Oh! still how fresh to memory's eyes
> Those hours of childish bliss arise,
> When in the deep and tangled dell
> I plucked the flowers I loved so well,
> Or on the primrose bank reclined,
> Gay bouquets formed or garlands twined,
> Decked hat and frock in flowery state
> And tottered with the fragrant weight,
> And still no infant better loves
> To view the primrose-spangled groves."

But the pleasant luxury of Alresford soon came to an end. Dr. Mitford, who had the disposal of his wife's fortune (except £3,500 in the Funds), gambled and squandered till the greater part of it was spent. The furniture and library had to be sold, and, after one move to Lyme Regis, the Mitfords were to be found, about the year 1795 or '96, in shabby lodgings on the Surrey side of Blackfriars Bridge. Here the improvident doctor had taken refuge from his creditors. Now came that *coup de théâtre*, a prize in the lottery, which again opened the golden gate of fortune. The doctor took his little girl to the lottery office to choose the number. A quantity of tickets were thrown

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down on the counter, and she at once chose the number 2,224. It was not easy to get the whole of that ticket, for the tickets were divided into shares, but the spoiled child was resolute, the doctor was superstitious, and so the sixteenth of that particular number was taken home, the remaining shares were bought up, and when the lottery was drawn, Dr. Mitford was the happy winner of £20,000, the largest prize then given! He at first thought of settling this sum on his daughter, but such a prudent plan was soon abandoned. With his pockets again replenished, he set up housekeeping at Reading, amiable Mrs. Mitford looking smilingly on while he drove his phaeton, kept his greyhounds, and enjoyed his favourite amusements of coursing and playing whist, at which he generally lost.

Meanwhile, Mary Mitford had been sent to school at 22, Hans Place, out of Sloane Street. The school was kept by M. and Madame St. Quentin, French emigrants, well born and bred. They were assisted by Miss Rowden, who taught Italian, music, and drawing, wrote poetry herself, and soon became Mary Mitford's fast friend. One of the favourite diversions of the pupils was acting plays and dancing ballets. They succeeded in giving a representation of Hannah More's *Search after Happiness*, in which Mary Mitford took the part of Cleora. A full account of the joys, the disappointments, and the *contretemps* of this performance is given in *Our Village*, and it had no doubt much effect in awakening the dramatic instincts of the little country girl, who was eleven years old when her school days began. She was short and decidedly fat. Her features, taken separately, were good and like her father's, but her complexion wanted colour, and the general effect of her face was plain. Her expression was, however, bright and frank, and she had the great charm of a peculiarly sweet voice.

During her school days she wrote a number of letters to her "dear darlings" at home, and they show an ease and a freedom from effort which was indeed rare among the

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schoolgirls of that time. Pet names abound. Her father is "dear old Tod" and "Dod;" her mother is "Mumpa" and "Mumpsa;" and she herself is "Mam Bonette" and "Twart."

Dr. Mitford, who loved change, had now bought a farm at Graseley, about three miles from Reading. Graseley Court was levelled to the ground, and Bertram House (so called to show that the doctor belonged to the Mitfords of Bertram) was built in its place. To Bertram House Miss Mitford came on leaving school in 1802. She could neither dance well nor curtsey well, and had a perfect horror of practising music, but she had acquired a taste for books of all kinds, and poetry especially. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and Metastasio were her delight. Balls were not much in her line, yet she "came out" at a race ball. The steward of the races was always bound to dance with the *débutantes*, and she thought herself fortunate in having Mr. Shaw Lefevre, as she "hoped to know him well enough to make the task of dancing less disagreeable."

Dr. Mitford was celebrated for paying sudden and unexpected visits to London, in order to gamble at the clubs. Meanwhile Mary petted his greyhounds, went out in the green chariot with her mother to pay visits, drove into Reading to shop, to pick up gossip, and to hear the news. At home she lay for hours on the sofa with her dog by her side, reading whatever came in her way, principally novels and poetry. Two volumes a day, Mr. L'Estrange considers, she must have devoured.

Some visits to the North of England made a break in her quiet life. Her father went with her and introduced her to his cousin, who had married Lord Charles Murray, fifth son of the Duke of Athole, but had taken the name of Aynsley for a fortune. By the Aynsleys Mary Mitford was brought to Alnwick Castle. She wore her ball-gown, and Lady Charles lent her a beautiful necklace of Scotch pebbles, with brooch and ornaments to match. "I kept my front

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hair in papers," she says, "till I reached Alnwick"—one of the few traits of vanity that can be recorded of her.

The pleasure of this Northern tour was considerably marred by the extraordinary conduct of Dr. Mitford, who started off to an election at Reading, leaving his daughter alone amongst strangers. Even she ventures to expostulate with her "dearest darling" on this strange desertion, and implores him to return for her. Another election in the North had the desired effect of bringing him back. He seems to have been "always busy doing nothing." Greatly to his satisfaction he had been made a magistrate, and no time had been lost in spending the lottery winnings. The furniture at Bertram House had been provided by a fashionable London upholsterer; the walls were covered with expensive paintings, amongst which was a charming Gainsborough, two sweet female heads by Greuze, and a portrait of the Doctor by Opie.

Mary Mitford had early shown a taste for verse-making, and about 1810 a volume of her Miscellaneous Poems was published by Valpy, for which she had the pleasure of paying £59. The verses were neither better nor worse than most young ladies' scribblings; they were smooth and flowing, but neither original nor forcible. The authoress was afterwards dubbed "Missy Mitford" in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and this impudent title was not wrongly applied, for the poems were decidedly missyish. They, however, served as a literary introduction, and the next volume was a poem called *Christina*, founded on the story of Christian's colony on Pitcairn's Island. It had the distinguished honour of being revised by Coleridge, and the blind admiration of Mrs. Mitford for her "treasure's" composition, and her wrath at Coleridge for striking out some bad lines to Walter Scott, are truly laughable. She considered that Coleridge had taken an extraordinary liberty, and put down the omission to a mean, pitiful spirit of resentment against Scott. *Christina*, we are told, became a very popular poem,

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particularly in America, where it went through several editions. Then came another volume of narrative poems, called *Blanche and the Rival Sisters.*

After this Miss Mitford committed, as she says, no more "pen-and-ink sins" for many years. During her early life she never once turned her attention to prose. She wrote charming letters full of "careless sauciness" to an elderly baronet, Sir William Elford, a friend of her father's, but she always seemed to imagine that rhyme was her forte. "I have been teased by booksellers and managers," she writes to Sir W. Elford, "and infinitely more by papa, for a novel or a play, but alas! I have been obliged to refuse, because I can only write in rhyme. . . . To be tall, thin, and pale, to have dark eyes, then, and not till then, will my prose be graceful."

How few of us know what we may do! Her prose became as much superior to her poetry as a landscape by Cuyp is to a young lady's first studies in water-colours, yet it took fifteen long years to mature her prose style. During that time she laid aside her pen, read more than ever, and enjoyed her life at Bertram House. Sometimes she paid visits to London, and met various notabilities at the house of Mr. Perry, of *The Morning Chronicle.* But the country was her most congenial element. She had an immense capacity for enjoyment. Small pleasures were not small to her; everything and every one was in superlatives. One friend (the Emily H—— of *Our Village*) is a person whom it is a privilege to know; another is a lovely young creature, the ideal of a poet; another is a glorious old lady of seventy-six. As to the dogs, words seem all too poor to describe their perfections. She was a most inveterate dog-lover. Among her papers was found an envelope sealed with black, containing some of her pet dog's hair. Inside was written —"My own dear darling Mossy's hair, cut off after he was dead by dear Drum" (her father). "He was the greatest darling that ever lived, a most magnificent and noble-looking

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creature." Then follows an account of his coat, of the most magnificent and glossy black, his singularly beautiful face; his eyes, very bright, and yet sweet, and fond, and tender—eyes that seemed to speak; his jet black nose, and his brow, which was bent and flexible like Mr. Fox's. "There never was such a dog. Thank God he went off without suffering. He was laid out last night in the stable, and this morning we buried him in the middle plantation, the flowery corner which is so richly covered with bluebells, orchises, and pansies. Everybody loved him, dear saint, as I used to call him, and as I doubt not he is now. My own beloved Mossy, Heaven bless you! Farewell, my own best beloved." Truly a dogless world would have been a desolation to Mary Mitford's capacious heart!

In February, 1820, she wrote her last letter from Bertram House. Things had been growing worse and worse. At one time Dr. Mitford was in the King's Bench Prison; taxes had fallen into arrears, and were only extorted by threatening letters; tradesmen refused to supply the house with goods. The self-denying mother and daughter had gradually reduced their establishment; the chariot, the paintings, the lady's-maid, had all disappeared; the footman had been replaced by an awkward boy, who waited at table and worked in the garden. Mrs. Mitford thanked her improvident husband for sending her ten pounds, and tells him that she will go to Reading and pay the butcher and baker. The food for the greyhounds was not forthcoming; and the heiress of thousands had to beg the Doctor to send her a one-pound note by return of post, as she and her mother were actually in want of bread. Yet no reproaches, no reflections on the selfishness which had caused this state of affairs, escaped from the sufferers. Dr. Mitford complained, on his side, that he had been cheated and ill-used. At last he became involved in a Chancery suit; the end was that a small field and £3,000 in the Funds was all that was left from the general smash. The

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Mitford family now removed to Three-Mile Cross, a mile nearer Reading.

"Our residence," writes Miss Mitford to Sir W. Elford, "is a cottage—no, not a cottage—a messuage—a tenement. It consists of a series of closets, the largest of which may be eight feet square, which they call kitchens, and parlours, and pantries. My great objection to a small room always was its extreme unbecomingness to one of my enormity. I really seem to fill it like a blackbird in a goldfinch's cage. The parlour looks all me. Nevertheless the cabin is convenient, as I said before, and is within reach of my dear old walks, the banks where I find my violets, the meadows full of cowslips, and the woods where the wood-sorrel blows."

The pen was now taken up again, but this time in good earnest, for Mary Mitford was to be the bread-winner of the house. She first wrote a tragedy on the subject of Fiesco, the Genoese nobleman who conspired against Doria. Besides this she busied herself writing poetry, criticism, and dramatic sketches for the magazines. "I have hardly a minute to spare," she says, "even for violets and primroses." Writing, too, with her was not a careless business that could be dashed off anyhow. "I ponder over every phrase," she says, "disjoint every sentence, and finally produce such lumps of awkwardness that I really expect, instead of paying for them, Mr. Colburn or Mr. Baldwin will send me back the trash; but I will improve. This is another resolution which is as fixed as fate."

Her dramatic sketches, which she wrote for *Baldwin's Magazine*—slight stories in one act, written in loose blank verse—were really profitable in filling her empty purse. She got fifteen guineas a sheet for them. Meanwhile her tragedy had been left in Mr. Macready's hands, but the writing was so illegible that it had to be copied before it could be presented to the managers. In two months it was

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returned to her, but with a favourable criticism. Strange to say, this country-bred woman had a natural aptitude for the stirring scenes of the stage. Her dialogue, to use her own words, "put salt on Macready's tail," and his judgment on *Fiesco* was that there was too little striking incident and too little fluctuation. She soon amended both faults, and in a few weeks was knee-deep in another tragedy on the subject of the Venetian Doge Foscari, who was obliged to condemn his own son. It was an unwelcome surprise to find that Byron had just finished a tragedy on the same subject, but she consoled herself when she found that he had taken up the subject just where she had laid it down. Any comparison, however, could not fail to be injurious to her. *Foscari* was duly completed and sent by Mr. Talfourd to Macready, who was to submit it to a leading London manager.

Meanwhile Mary Mitford awaited the result with hope and fear. Everything now depended on the success of the *Foscari*.

"I do so love a drive in a pony-chaise!" she naïvely cries. "If my *Foscari* were to succeed I should be tempted to keep one myself. Everything I want or wish I always say if *Foscari* succeeds. I said so the other day about a new straw bonnet, and then about a white geranium, and then about a pink sash, and then about a straw work-basket, and then about a pocket-book—all in the course of one street."

Yet all these hopes were cruelly blighted. The tragedy was returned by Macready with the opinion that though the style was pure and chaste, and some of the scenes highly effective, yet as a whole it would not be successful. A hint was, however, thrown out that, if the author chose to revise and alter, this decision might be reconsidered. Heroically then Miss Mitford set to work. She made her play much

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stronger, more manly; the fifth act she re-wrote completely *for the seventh time.* "Only think," she says, "of the difficulty of writing another catastrophe with so many foregone conclusions flitting before my brain. There have been two assassinations, two deaths by joy—father and son, two poisonings, one worse than the other. Now here I am about to kill my hero in fair fight. Heaven prosper him, poor fellow, and commend him to the good graces at Covent Garden!" "I am so worn out by hopes and fears about this play," she says again, "that I have really ceased to think about it."

Charles Kemble was now to be the arbiter of its fate. Miss Mitford went to London in October, 1821, to see him about it, and he faithfully promised to bring it out next season. But delay followed delay, and another of Miss Mitford's plays—*Julian*—founded on a fictitious story, was the first actually performed on the second Saturday of March, 1822. Macready took the part of the hero, and he was supported by Miss Foote. The success of the piece was considered complete. Miss Mitford came up on a visit to Mrs. Hofland to witness the first performance of *Julian*, and to enjoy her well-earned triumph. She got £200 for *Julian*, but, as a set-off to this, anxieties of all kinds abounded. Charles Kemble threatened her with a lawsuit if she withdrew the *Foscari* from Covent Garden, and she was tossed between him and Macready like a cricket-ball. *Julian* was stopped (no one tells us why) at the end of the eighth night, though it was going brilliantly to crowded houses, and the manager of the *Lady's Magazine* absconded, forty pounds in her debt. Backwards and forwards, from green-room to green-room, went this shabbily-dressed, country-bred woman, prematurely old and grey, "looking in a well-dressed crowd like an old-fashioned humorist," gallantly pushing her way in the most difficult branch of literature, spending nothing on herself, counting every penny of her earnings in the vain hope of supplying her father's rapacity for luxuries.

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"The free and happy days," she writes to Sir W. Elford, "when I could read, and think, and prattle, are passed away. Oh! will they ever return? I am now chained to the desk eight, ten, twelve hours a day, at mere drudgery. All my thoughts of writing are for hard money, all my correspondence is on hard business. Oh, pity me! pity me! pity me! My very mind is sinking under the fatigue and anxiety!"

Meanwhile Dr. Mitford did nothing to relieve his daughter's burdens. He talked of getting the management of estates, or some work of superintendence, but in reality it ended in talk, and he spent and squandered as much as ever. His daughter heroically dwells on his manliness (?), his perfect integrity, and his strong sense of duty and right, till one is amazed at the mental colour-blindness which *would* not see the real facts of her "dearest darling's" life.

Such a wealth of reverence was hers that she must throw it away on some one. Much was also given to the eccentric painter, B. R. Haydon. She wrote to him at the King's Bench Prison as an "imprisoned antelope, a caged lion," and lavished tons of admiration on him as a painter, and on his wife ("like Scott's Rebecca") as a beauty. He had painted a portrait of Miss Mitford which was universally condemned; it represented a Brobdingnagian fat woman seated in a bower of Brobdingnagian honeysuckles, yet she would not allow any one to find fault with it. "In the first place it was a present, and in the second my personal feelings for him would make it gratifying to me were it as ugly as Medusa. He is a most admirable person, whose very faults spring from that excess of brilliancy and life with which he is gifted."

It is in 1824 that the first mention is made of *Our Village*. "I am hoping," she tells Sir W. Elford, "to get out a little volume of very playful prose. It will be called *Our Village*, and will consist of essays, and characters, and stories, chiefly

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of country life, in the manner of the *Sketch-Book*, but with less sentimentality and pathos, things which I abhor." Some of these sketches were reprints from magazines, and she little imagined that this unpretending volume would hand her name down to posterity, while her more ambitious tragedies are long forgotten. The charm of *Our Village* is in its perfect freshness, ease, and truth. Mrs. S. C. Hall says that her *Sketches of Irish Character*, her first Irish book, was inspired by the wish to describe her native place as Miss Mitford did hers in *Our Village*; it was this made her an author. There is, indeed, in these word-pictures a wonderful reproduction of the fields and scenes which Miss Mitford had loved so long. Take, for example, a few bits extracted at random :—

"May 2nd. A delicious evening, bright sunshine, light summer air, a sky almost cloudless, and a fresh yet delicate verdure on the hedgerows and in the fields. An evening that seems made for a visit to a newly-discovered haunt, the mossy dell."

"June 25th. What a glowing, glorious day! Summer in its richest prime, noon in its most sparkling brightness, little white clouds dappling the deep blue sky, and the sun now partially veiled, and now bursting through them with an intensity of light."

"January 23rd. At noon to-day I and my white greyhound, Mayflower, set out for a walk into a very beautiful world, a sort of silent fairyland, a creation of that matchless magician the hoar frost. The atmosphere was deliciously calm, soft, even mild in spite of the thermometer, no perceptible air, but a stillness that might almost be felt, the sky rather grey than blue, throwing out into bold relief the snow-covered roofs of our village, and the rimy trees that rose above them, and the sun shining dimly as through a veil, giving a fine pale light like the moon, only brighter."

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The living people who give vigour to these scenes stand out just as distinctly. The carpenter's daughter, three-years-old Lizzy ; John Evans, the gardener ; Hannah Bent, the independent little dairy-woman ; Lucy, the favourite servant, who united the pleasant and amusing qualities of the French *soubrette* with the solid excellence of an English-woman of the old school ; and cousin Mary, who would sit "printing her thoughts on lawn," and then be as full of spirits as a schoolboy, singing, laughing, and skipping from morning till night—all these are touched off with a minute and skilful hand. The two modern antiques, Mrs. Frances and Mrs. Theodosia, are as inimitable as a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. There is something delicately touching in the passing allusion to the old romance of Mrs. Frances with the town member :—"The world of woe that in fifty years of hopeless constancy had passed through that maiden heart. The timid hope, the sickening suspense, the slow, slow fear, the bitter disappointment, the powerless anger, the relenting, the forgiveness, and then again that interest kinder than love, more endearing than friendship," shown only at cards or at the tea-table. How admirably the cottage at "Three-Mile Cross" is described ! We can actually *see* it :—

"A cottage—no, a miniature house, with many additions, little odds and ends of places, pantries, and what-not, all angles and of a charming in-and-outness. A little bricked court before one half, and a little flower-yard before the other ; the walls, old and weather-stained, covered with hollyhocks, roses, honeysuckles, and a great apricot-tree, the casements full of geraniums (ah ! there is our superb white cat peeping out from among them). The closets—our landlord has the assurance to call them rooms—full of contrivances and corner cupboards, and the little garden behind full of common flowers—tulips, pinks, larkspurs, peonies, stocks, and carnations, with an arbour of privet not unlike

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a sentry-box, where one lives in a delicious green light, and looks out on the gayest of all gay flower-beds."

Charles Lamb might well say that nothing so fresh or characteristic as *Our Village* had appeared for some time. Miss Mitford's style resembles that of the *Essays of Elia* in one important respect—it is individual, it belongs specially to the author, just as a particular scent belongs to one particular flower. Many writers now-a-days have no style —that is, they have no special way of expressing their thoughts peculiar to themselves. We may read many pages of Miss Braddon or Mrs. Henry Wood without being able to detect any difference between them, but an author who has the merit of a distinctive style will be at once recognised. The style of *Our Village* is unique ; it is steeped in the very atmosphere of nature. "The single eye, the daughter of the light," were words used by Charles Kingsley to the author of *Our Village*, and such words were not misapplied. Among those who have trodden in Miss Mitford's steps Madame De Gasparin is the best, but she lacks the cheerful heartiness of the old maid who had nothing old-maidish about her.

A tragedy on Cromwell and Charles I. was her next work, but when it was finished and submitted to the Lord Chamberlain he refused to license it, as Charles was still considered a martyr, and the 30th January was then observed in such solemn silence that all the theatres in London were closed. This was, of course, a great disappointment. Miss Mitford had received £150 for the copyright of the second series of *Our Village*, but still she felt bound to work harder than ever ; her mother's faculties were fast failing, and any reduction in her comforts would have been most severely felt.

An unexpected flash of good fortune came in November, 1826. The long-held-back *Foscari* was at last performed, and a letter came to Mrs. Mitford marked on the outside

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MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

BORN DECEMBER 16TH, 1786; DIED JANUARY 10TH, 1855.

UNIV. OF MICH.
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"Good news." Miss Mitford wrote to tell of the complete success of her play:—"The house was so full that you might have walked over the heads in the pit. Two of the actors made a regular hit, and Mr. Young gave out the tragedy with immense applause." The play was expected to run three nights a week till Christmas. The money part of the business was no less satisfactory; £100 was to be given on the third, ninth, fifteenth, and twentieth nights. It is a common prejudice that an author cannot do two things well, and the readers of *Our Village* could hardly be brought to believe that the same writer could also produce a serious tragedy. Miss Mitford implores these sceptics to go and cry at *Foscari*, for during two acts the white handkerchiefs were going continually, to her great astonishment.

On the following October her third tragedy, *Rienzi*, more clear, powerful, and sustained than any of her plays, was performed at Drury Lane, with Mr. Young for the hero, and a new actress, Miss Phillips, for the heroine. Stansfield, the celebrated artist, painted the scenes, one of which was an accurate representation of Rienzi's house at Rome. The success was considered splendid, the new actress charming, and the attendance such as had not been known since Mrs. Siddons. Certainly an amazing triumph for a quiet woman of forty, who had slight practical knowledge of theatrical matters, and whose acquaintance with Rome and the Romans was entirely gleaned from books. Miss Mitford's *Rienzi* is gracefully spoken of by Lord Lytton in the preface to his historical romance of that name. The first edition of the published play was sold in three days, and it was rapturously received in America.

But this great success made Miss Mitford nervous and languid, and for the first time she speaks of low spirits. In 1830 her mother died; "the dear angel, after gradually sinking, expired without a sigh; the best mother, the most devoted wife, the most faithful friend that ever lived." Miss

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Mitford had now to bear the burthen of her father's extravagance alone, and as best she might. The want of money being unusually pressing, Dr. Mitford, who loved to trade on his daughter's brains, went to London to do what he could about *Charles I.* The play was offered to Mr. Abbott, who had the management of the Coburg (now Victoria) Theatre. As this theatre was on the Surrey side of the Thames, and out of the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain, no license was required; the tragedy was immediately accepted, and £200 promised for it. For ten days before the performance Miss Mitford spent from four to six hours every morning at rehearsals, scolding hard, for the play was entirely got up by her. Her exertions were rewarded, and her pet actor, Mr. Cathcart, fulfilled her best hopes. It is hard to reconcile this chapter of her life with the geranium-planting and dahlia nursing at Three-Mile Cross.

An opera, *Sadak* and *Kalascade*, which was produced at the Lyceum Theatre in 1835, was the last theatrical work of hers which was brought before the public, though she wrote two more tragedies, *Inez de Castro* and *Otto*, neither of which seems ever to have been acted. *Belford Regis*, her first actual novel, was published about this time; she herself preferred it to her other prose works, and Stephen Law, the butcher, is one character which appears and disappears in several of the stories, and gives a sustained interest to the whole.

In 1837 Miss Mitford was granted a Government pension of £100 a year, and this seasonable bounty relieved her a little from the anxiety which pressed heavily on her shoulders. Her father was getting old and feeble; he suffered at night from cramp, and she had to sit by his bedside to read to him for four or five hours at a time, to amuse him by playing cribbage, besides writing eight or ten letters a day, and doing what she could for the press. "I believe there is not a labourer's wife in the parish," she says, "who thinks as

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much of spending a shilling as I do." Her father is always her "dear, dear father, a person of a thousand virtues, honest, faithful, true, just, and kind." "It is my fault," she writes, when asking her executor about an annuity, "entirely my fault, that this money is needed;" and then she confesses that she has not bought a cloak, a bonnet, a gown, hardly a pair of gloves, for the last four years. "I dare not touch my father's comforts."

Her letters to her friends—to Elizabeth Barrett, her "best beloved," especially—are as bright and sparkling as if everything was going well; she can even feel a *passion* for indigenous orchises. Speaking of her father, she only says—"He is so restless—so very, very restless. Last night he called me his treasure, his favourite name for his poor daughter." She imagined that everybody admired the vermilion-tinted doctor, who had spent several fortunes, as much as she did herself. He died in December, 1842, and left a considerable number of debts. "Everything shall be paid," cried his daughter, "even if I sell the gown off my back or pledge my little pension."

Everything *was* paid; a public subscription was raised, and £1,300 was received. Great numbers of American and English visitors came to Three-Mile Cross to see the plain grey-haired lady who beamed upon them from "her wonderful wall of forehead." Her head was pronounced by a phrenologist to be larger than the average male head. On each side of her temples lay thick grey curls, exquisitely fine in texture. Mr. Fields, the American publisher, speaks of the peculiar ringing sweetness of her voice, rippling out sometimes like a beautiful chime of silver bells. When listening to anything that interested her very much she had a way of saying, "Dear me! dear me! dear me!" She had "large, slowly-moving, sad grey eyes, sometimes lit up by the drollest humour." On the subject of dress she was profoundly ignorant; she usually wore a motherly cap trimmed with white or grey ribbons. Once she forgot to

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take off the shop-ticket from the bow or border of her head-gear, where it remained dangling in a conspicuous position all the evening.

Her sympathies were of the widest kind. When the rector's wife complained of some school-going little culprits who had cleared the orchard of apples and pears, Miss Mitford said with her most benignant smile, "Ah! dear little creatures! I know they are very *fond of fruit.*" No one was ever less vain or self-conscious; she was always urging on her young literary friends the duty of patient, laborious care. "Remember," she once said, "to the very last I used often to write a story four or five times over, and I believe that my little reputation is due to that painstaking; I am sure the duration of it is." The preface to the tragedies was written three times over throughout, and many parts of it five or six.

About five years after her father's death—Three-Mile Cross falling out of repair—she removed to a cottage called Swallowfield, six miles from Reading. The Kingsleys were among her neighbours, and she speaks of Charles Kingsley, who spent a morning with her, as "not a bit like an author, only a frank, charming, genial young man."

"Never," says he, "can I forget the little figure rolled up on two chairs in the little Swallowfield room, packed round with books up to the ceiling on to the floor; the little figure with clothes on, of course, but of no recognised or recognisable pattern, and somewhere out of the upper end of the heap, gleaming under a great globular brow, two such eyes as I never perhaps saw in any other Englishwoman, though I believe she must have had French blood in her veins to breed such eyes and such a tongue, for the beautiful speech which came of that ugly (it was then) face, and the depth and glitter of the eyes, like live coals—perfectly honest the which, both lips and eyes—these seemed to me to be the attributes of the highest French or rather Gallic, not of the highest Englishwomen." James Payn in his *Literary*

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Recollections also tells of his visits to Miss Mitford "in her small apartment, lined with books from floor to ceiling, and fragrant with flowers." He says she was like a "venerable fairy with bright sparkling eyes, a clear, incisive voice, and a laugh that carried you away with it. Her handwriting was delicate and microscopic, looking as if it were done with a stylus, and without blot or flaw."

The closing years of her life were clouded by perpetual illness, partly brought on by an accident from a pony-carriage, yet she struggled on bravely to the last. *Atherton* was written under tremendous difficulties; the rheumatic pain in the chest not only rendered her cough terrible, but made the position of writing one of misery, yet never was a brighter or more sunshiny story penned. At length the cheery, dauntless nature that had held out for sixty-seven years gave way, and Mary Russell Mitford breathed her last at Swallowfield on the 19th of January, 1855. As she lay in her coffin, "the features of her face, undisturbed by the cares, the anxieties, and the terrible sadness of life, were overspread by an expression of intense love, and charity, and peace such as no living face ever wore."

Such a death was a fitting conclusion to a life which for patient, heroic industry, and noble self-devotion to others can hardly be matched in the history of literature.

Miss Mitford was one of our best English letter-writers. She takes rank with Cowper and Lady M. W. Montagu. She had the true *l'éloquence du billet.* There is a lightness, a grace, and playful ease about her simplest notes impossible to describe. She glances from subject to subject, and leaves an impression like sunlight on whatever she touches.

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XVI.

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

1790–1849.

Authoresses round a tea-table—Lady Blessington's health is proposed—A Tipperary home—Marguerite is born at Knockbrit—The Powers settle at Clonmel—Marriage with Captain Farmer—Ill-treatment—Captain Farmer's death—Marriage with the Earl of Blessington—At St. James's Square—Travels in France and Italy—Acquaintance with Lord Byron—Widowhood—Novels—*Annuals* and *Books of Beauty*—Gore House—Debts and difficulties—Death at Paris.

"WHAT! Lady Blessington a *celebrated* authoress?"—my readers may exclaim. To this the answer is that nothing is so fleeting as fame; one name is constantly being wiped out, like blurred pencil-marks on a slate, and another substituted in its stead. In her day, Lady Blessington certainly *was* celebrated, and took her place among the most noted literary women of her time. She made between £2,000 and £3,000 a year by her pen; her *Conversations with Lord Byron*, her novels, her *Books of Beauty*, were the talk of the town, and in an amusing caricature in *Frazer's Magazine* of the authoresses of that day, she is pre-eminent. The ladies are represented sitting round a tea-table, singing the following chorus:—

"Toss away the tea-pot!
Let us have a bowl, girls!
Why the deuce should *we* not
Have our feast of soul, girls?

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Swell the chorus—Heaven o'er us
Laughs to see our giggling;
Come, gay lasses, brimming glasses,
Lose no time in higgling."

At the top of the table sits Mrs. S. C. Hall, who is thus described:

"Mrs. Hall, so fair and fine,
Bids her brilliant eyes to glow,
Eyes the brightest of the nine.
Would be but too proud to show."

Next comes "the lovely L. E. L., who talks with tongue that will not tire."

"True, she turns away her face
Out of pity for us men,
But the swan-like neck we trace,
And the figure full of grace,
And the *mignonne* hand, whose pen
Wrote the *Golden Violet*,
And the *Lit'r'ry Gazette*,
And Francesca's mournful story."

Then comes little Lady Morgan, holding her saucer in one hand. Passing over Harriet Martineau and Jane Porter, we come to Mrs. Norton and Lady Blessington—Mrs. Norton, with

"Front sublime and orb of splendour,
Glance that ev'ry thought can speak,
Feeling proud or pathos tender,
The lid to wet or burn the cheek.
O! if thy Wand'ring Jew had seen
Those sunny eyes, those locks of jet,
How vain, how trifling would have been
The agony of fond regret,
Which in thy strain
He's made to feel
For the creations of thy brain;
Those wounds, thou say'st, he lived to heal,
Thee lost, he ne'er had loved again."

Lady Blessington is addressed thus:

"O gorgeous Countess, gayer notes
For all that's charming, sweet and smiling;
For her whose pleasant tales our throats
Are ever of fresh laughs beguiling—

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Say, shall we call thee bright and fair,
Enchanting, winning—but, oh! far hence
Such praise as ours, what need she care
For aught beyond Sir Thomas Lawrence."

The ladies duly propose each other's healths, and Miss Mitford (the jolliest of the eight) makes the following speech :—

"I wish in a pressing tone
To drink Lady Blessington;
For not even the frenzy
Of Cola Rienzi
Displayed half her fervour—
I beg you'll observe her
From her top-knot to shoe-tie,
She's a model of beauty,
And a consummate dresser.
Well! here's Heaven bless her!"

Thus, admired and flattered, Lady Blessington held an undisputed reign. One writer told her that she had all "the tact, truth, and grace of De Staël;" another, that her novel of *The Two Friends* reminded him of the delicate touches of Manzoni in *I Promessi Sposi;* Moore and Byron, Landor and Beattie wrote verses to her; American scribblers were not content to leave London till they had seen the inside of Gore House, and had had the felicity of shaking hands with the gorgeous Countess.

Her life, fitful and changing as an April day, is perhaps more interesting than any of her novels. Her father, Edmund Power, of Knockbrit, in the county Tipperary, was a rattling, hard-living, spendthrift squireen, devoted to dogs, horses, and revelry. Marguerite was his third child and second daughter, and was born on the 1st of September, 1790. Her mother belonged to a very old Roman Catholic family—the Sheehys—and boasted a descent from the Desmonds. "These were her household gods, and their deeds and prowess her favourite theme." She had little else to boast of: the Powers were as poor as they were proud, and a more unhappy, reckless

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LADY BLESSINGTON.

BORN SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1789; DIED JUNE 4TH, 1849.

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house than this of Knockbrit could hardly be found. Mr. Power was showy-looking and aristocratic in appearance, known among the bloods of Tipperary as "Beau Power" and "Shiver the Frills;" he was much given to ruffles and white cravats, to the wearing of leather-breeches and top-boots. At home, he was always violent and often drunk, finishing four or five tumblers of punch at a sitting.

Beauty, the one heritage of the family, did not seem to be given to Marguerite. Her elder brother and sister, Michael and Anne, as well as Ellen and Robert, were singularly handsome and healthy, while she was pale, weakly, and ailing. All the wise women of the county shook their heads over her precocity and sensitiveness, and declared that she was doomed to an early grave. She had little sympathy with her lively, robust brothers and sisters, and lived in a world of dreams and fancies of her own. Luckily for her, a Miss Anne Dwyer, a friend of her mother's, better educated than most of her countrywomen were at that time, began to teach her, and Marguerite's lively imagination developed rapidly. She entertained her brothers and sisters with extempore tales; and her parents, astonished at the interest of these stories, constantly called upon her to improvise for the amusement of their friends. In a short time, the little neglected child became the wonder of the neighbourhood.

As the children grew older, the Powers removed to the town of Clonmel. Marguerite was very reluctant to leave her birthplace. When the day of departure came, she stole into the garden to bid farewell to it; she picked a handful of flowers, to keep it in memory of the spot, and, afraid of ridicule, hid them in her pocket. So, with many tears and regrets, she was driven away from Knockbrit, where, it seemed to her, she left all happiness behind. Settled at Clonmel, in a small house near the bridge leading to the adjoining county of Waterford, Marguerite's health began to improve. She and her sisters were sent to school, but

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had to endure all sorts of humiliations, as their school-bills were not paid regularly, and therefore they were not able to learn tambour-embroidery, as the rest of the pupils did.

Mr. Power, more reckless than ever, launched out into all sorts of expenses. He had been made a magistrate for the counties of Waterford and Tipperary, and, led on by the promise of a good situation, and hints of a baronetcy, he hunted down the luckless rebels of '98 and '99 with unusual zeal. He went out with troops of dragoons, seized innocent men on the road, and shot them down without a trial. He once went too far, and was implicated in flogging a French teacher, named Wright, merely because he had a French letter in his pocket. A trial followed, the verdict went against Mr. Power, and he had to pay the costs. This trial almost ruined him. He set up as a corn-merchant and butter-buyer, and spent a great deal of money building warehouses, &c., but all these buildings were burnt down by the infuriated people, in revenge for the cruelties which he had practised on them.

Little Marguerite remembered with horror the sight of a wounded man mounted behind the servant and brought into the stable-yard of her father's house. This victim of Mr. Power's ferocity, "pale and ghastly, his head sunk on his breast, his strength apparently exhausted, his clothes steeped in blood," haunted the minds of the young Powers for years. A prosecution followed, Mr. Power fled to England, and, though acquitted at the trial, his name was expunged from the magistracy. Another of his victims was a young man named Lonergan. The dead body was brought into the town and laid out in the Court-house; the boy's mother, after gazing at it for some time, knelt down and solemnly cursed her son's murderer. The curse seemed to fall. Not only did young Michael Power die at St. Lucia, but the eldest daughter, Anne, sank into an early grave from a nervous fever brought on by terror and anxiety.

Ruin and misfortune stared the family in the face. Mr.

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Power, always passionate, now gave way to constant outbursts of rage, he became a terror to the household, treated his wife with brutality, and constantly reproached her for having rebel blood in her veins.

Just at this time the 47th Regiment was ordered to Clonmel, and all the gentry of the place threw open their houses to entertain the officers. Mr. Power, in spite of his empty pockets, was not behindhand in hospitality. His daughter, Marguerite, was now fourteen, not a beauty, like her younger sister, Ellen, but a most graceful dancer and much observed at the little *coteries* of Clonmel, where young girls were allowed to go, before their regular *début*, at balls. Mr. Power looked upon Marguerite as a schoolgirl, and did not trouble himself to introduce her to the officers at his dinner-table. They, however, introduced themselves. Two of them, Captain Farmer and Captain Murray, were particularly attentive. Marguerite was pleased and flattered at Captain Murray's attentions, but for Captain Farmer she felt an instinctive terror and dislike. He was young and good-looking, but there was a wildness and abruptness about him that savoured of insanity and made her shrink away every time she met him. What was her amazement, when one day her father called her in and told her that she need not go back to school, that Captain Farmer had proposed for her; he was well off and she must marry him forthwith. Resistance was quite useless, Mr. Power's fiery temper and stubborn will put that out of the question; he was, besides, a ruined man, only too glad to get rid of his daughter on any terms.

In spite of tears, prayers, and entreaties, the unfortunate girl was married at fourteen and a half to a man who inspired her with nothing but terror and detestation. The result of such a marriage may be guessed. Her husband knew that she disliked him, though she did her best not to show it, and this knowledge produced such frequent and terrible paroxysms of rage and jealousy that his victim

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trembled in his presence. He was subject to fits of insanity, and his own relations told the young wife that her father knew of them before the marriage took place. She lived with Captain Farmer, some say for three months, others for three years. During this time he used to strike her face, pinch her till her arms were black and blue, lock her up whenever he went out, and leave her without food till she was almost famished. At last, driven to desperation, she fled from him and sought refuge in her father's house. A separation was agreed upon, but she found her former home more miserable than ever. Her father was unkind, and sometimes more than unkind. She was looked upon as an interloper, and one who sadly interfered with her sister's prospects.

Things became, at length, so intolerable that she was obliged to seek refuge elsewhere. In 1807, she was living at Cahir, in the county of Tipperary; in 1809 we find her in Dublin; a little later in Hampshire, and in 1816 she settled at Manchester Square, London. Here she remained for some time, and the beauty which had been denied to her childhood, now burst out into full glow. Her figure is described as being exquisitely formed with an inclination to fulness, while the expression of her face was remarkably joyous—sparkling eyes, smiling lips, cheerful looks. As for her laugh, like that of the celebrated comic actress, Mrs. Jordan, it was clear, sweet, and ringing, full of the very spirit of mirth. Sorrow had not crushed her Irish vivacity, and she was more ready to laugh than to cry.

Among her visitors was the Earl of Blessington, a widower of three years' standing. He was not a pattern of morality, but in comparison with Captain Farmer he seemed an angel of light. He admired the lovely Mrs. Farmer, but what was to be done? She was not free. Things were in this state when news came of an inquest held at Middlesex Hospital, Wells Street, on the body of Captain Maurice Farmer, suddenly killed by falling from a window in the King's

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Bench Prison. He had gone to visit some friends there, they had drunk four quarts of rum together, and when Captain Farmer got up to go home he found the door locked. He scrambled out on the ledge of the window, lost his balance, fell to the ground, and died soon afterwards. "Died drunk!" Such was the verdict on Marguerite Power's first husband. Four months after his death she became Countess of Blessington, and her devoted second husband took her over to Ireland to visit his Tyrone estates.

Nothing was too good for her now. The most costly preparations were made for her reception at Mountjoy Forest. Her private sitting-room was hung "with crimson Genoa silk velvet trimmed with gold bullion fringe, a richness only suited to a state-room in a palace." The frieze-coated peasantry, living in wretched hovels, long remembered the wonderful doings of his lordship on this occasion. The Mountjoy property, once valued at £30,000 a year, was already heavily encumbered, and ill-fitted to bear any further charges. Nevertheless money was lavished with a free hand, and no one thought of the morrow.

After a few weeks at Tyrone, the Blessingtons returned to London. Instead of her modest house in Manchester Square, Lady Blessington found herself at the head of a splendid mansion in St. James's Square, surrounded by gorgeous furniture, glittering ornaments, and everything her heart could desire. At twenty-eight she was launched into fashionable life. Royal dukes and statesmen, Burdett, Castlereagh, Scarlett, Erskine, Kemble, Mathews, Lawrence, and Wilkie, crowded to her conversaziones, and for three years she kept a sort of mimic court. Young, beautiful, witty, graceful, and good-humoured, she was able to hold her own with the *élite* of London society.

Among the strangers who were introduced to her drawing-rooms was a certain French Count, Alfred D'Orsay, who was afterwards to play a considerable part in the Blessington history.

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About this time also, Lady Blessington began to dabble in literature, and wrote her first book, *The Magic Lantern; or, Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis.* These scenes are "The Auction, the Park, the Tomb, the Italian Opera." They showed a good deal of cleverness and smart descriptive power, and was followed the same year by *Sketches and Fragments*, in which Lady Blessington began to lecture society. Lecturing was not her forte, but she could hit off a scene in fashionable life with a great deal of verve and spirit.

Ennui now began to trouble Lord Blessington's peace, he was bitten by a love of change. London, with all its charms, could not satisfy him, and he must try the Continent. Accordingly in the month of August, 1822, he and his wife, accompanied by her sister Mary Anne Power, and Charles James Mathews, afterwards the celebrated actor, started on their travels. "What changes, what dangers," writes Lady Blessington in her journal, "may come before I again sleep beneath this roof!" She never did sleep beneath it again. Lord Blessington travelled *en prince.* At Paris he hired a cook who had been in the Emperor's kitchen, and laid in a *batterie de cuisine* which had served an entire club. While he was thus occupied, Lady Blessington visited the Louvre thirty times, and found that "fine pictures and fine sculptures, like fine music, gain by long acquaintance."

After a sojourn of twelve days, the Blessington party set out for Switzerland, and touring about the different towns, they arrived at Avignon, where they remained two months. Here Count D'Orsay joined them, and became from that time a hanger-on to the party. Lady Blessington, like most of her sex, was fired with an admiration for Byron. In her journal she notes her arrival at Genoa on the 31st of March, and adds, "Am I indeed in the same town with Byron, and to-morrow I may behold him!" To-morrow she *did* behold him, and her remark was, "Well, I never will allow myself to form an ideal of any person I desire to see, for disappoint-

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ment never fails to ensue." Her verdict on him was that he was too gay, too flippant for a poet; his verdict on *her* in a letter to Moore, is as follows :—"Miladi seems highly literary, to which I attribute the pleasure of having seen them. She is also very pretty, even in a morning—a species of beauty on which the sun of Italy does not shine so frequently as the chandelier. Certainly English women wear better than their continental neighbours of the same sex." The more Lady Blessington saw of Byron the more she liked him; they became really intimate, and her influence over him had a good effect. She advised him not to write a line that could bring a blush on his daughter's cheek, and he answered, "You are right, I never recollected this before." He begged her to give him one of her rings, as a parting present, and in return he gave her a pin containing a small cameo of Napoleon. The next morning she received a note to say that he was superstitious, and had recollected that memorials *with a point*, had a bad augury. Instead of the pin, he sent a chain of Venetian work. Lady Blessington once asked him for some verses, and he replied that his "heart was as grey as his head."

"Let the young and the brilliant aspire
To sing what I gaze on in vain,
For sorrow has torn from my lyre
The string which was worthy the strain."

Lady Blessington's answer is a good specimen of her easy fluent verses :—

"When I asked for a strain, pray believe,
'Twas not vanity urged the desire;
For no more can my mirror deceive,
No more can I poets inspire.
Time has touched with rude fingers my brow,
And the roses have fled from my cheek,
And it surely were folly, if now
I the praise due to beauty should seek;
But, as pilgrims who visit the shrine
Of some saint, bear a relic away;

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I sought a memorial of thine,
As a treasure, when distant I stray.
Oh! say not that lyre is unstrung
Whose chords can such rapture bestow
Or that mute is that magical tongue
From which music and poetry flow.
And though sorrow, ere youth yet has fled,
May have altered thy lock's jetty hue,
The rays that encircle thy head
Hide the ravaging marks from our view.'

From this acquaintance, Lady Blessington wrote her well-known *Conversations with Lord Byron*, and as she and her party pursued their luxurious way from Genoa to Rome, and from Rome to Padua and Venice, she gleaned materials for her *Idler in Italy*.

Byron had noticed and admired Count D'Orsay, "he has the air of a Cupid *déchainé*," he wrote to Moore. "Le Beau Comte" was indeed one of those men whose business in life seems to be to look handsome and to make use of their friends. He was far from stupid, he was a good sculptor, and had a taste for literature; but he had no wish to work for his living. He was too noble looking, too beautiful, too faultlessly dressed for such drudgery. Balzac alone could do justice to such a man. In spite of the regularity of his features and the symmetry of his form, he must have been at heart a lazy, selfish sensualist, who did not care how his friends suffered, as long as he was pleased. The strange thing was that everybody was delighted with him—everybody believed in him. Lady Blessington, woman of the world as she was, never saw through him, and his influence over Lord Blessington was unbounded. Lord Blessington had four children by his first wife. By a will made at Genoa, he left Count D'Orsay guardian of these children, and whichever of Lord Blessington's two daughters the Count chose to marry, was left heiress of a large property. In 1827, when Lady Harriet Gardiner was a shy, reserved girl of fifteen, this ill-fated marriage took place.

Six months afterwards, the Blessington party left Italy for

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Paris. What a Pandora's box that travelling carriage must have been, as it rolled smoothly along! The Earl himself, satiated with pleasure and weary of being amused; Lady Blessington, ill at ease and troubled at heart in spite of her silvery laugh; the bride, sullen, gloomy, and discontented; and the handsome Count, well pleased at the success of his plans. Before his marriage, he had charged the Blessington estates with £20,000 of debt, so he certainly had played his cards well. The splendid hotel of Marshal Ney was taken at Paris, and money was lavished with a free hand. Lord Blessington delighted in surprises; when the doors of the *chambre à coucher* and dressing-room were thrown open, an enchanter's wand seemed to have been at work. "As usual," writes Lady Blessington, "when my most gallant of all gallant husbands that it ever fell to the lot of woman to possess, interferes, no expense has been spared. The bed, which is silvered instead of gilt, rests on the back of two large silver swans, so exquisitely sculptured that every feather is in alto-relievo, and looks as fleecy as those of the living bird. The recess in which it is placed is lined with white fluted silk, bordered with blue embossed lace. Pale blue silk curtains, lined with white, conceal the recess altogether." Everything was *en suite*, "the hangings of the dressing-room blue silk covered with lace, the bath of marble, on the ceiling a painting of Flora scattering flowers with one hand, while from the other is suspended an alabaster lamp in the form of a lotus." A queen could desire nothing better.

But all this splendour was doomed to be short lived. Lord Blessington was suddenly attacked by apoplexy, while riding in the Champs Elysées, and died on the 23rd of May, 1829. For a second time, Lady Blessington was a widow; she was now thirty-nine, but had not yet lost her youthfulness of feeling and heart. In the latter part of 1831 she returned to London, and settled at Seamore Place, Mayfair. She had only a jointure of £2,000 a year, but she launched

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out into all the luxury and splendour which had become second nature. The Count and Countess D'Orsay at first occupied the same house as she did ; then a separation took place, Lady Harriet returned to her sister, and the Count took a small house in Curzon Street, but spent most of his time with his step-mother-in-law. What their actual relations were, no one could tell, but many tongues were always ready with slander, and poor good-natured, generous Lady Blessington suffered terribly in consequence. She certainly often had the privilege of paying the Count's debts ; his bootmaker's bill alone amounted to £300, he rode the best horses in London, his tilbury, his coats, his whiskers, his attitudes, were alike perfection. He was the glass of fashion and the mould of form. He had the chest of Apollo, the waist of a gnat. He spent some hours in his studio, modelling, but, like Harold Skimpole, in *Bleak House*, he was a child about money matters—they were quite beneath him. His friends had to suffer for his ignorance, while he walked about, the observed of all observers.

All this time, Lady Blessington was busy at her pen. It was not now an amusement, it was a necessity with her to work ; how else were the splendours of her house to be kept up ? She had so many dependents, too—father, mother, brother, with six children—besides no end of hungry relations craving for help. She was always ready to help when she could ; she besieged her friends in power for situations ; this person wanted to be a letter-carrier, another wanted a secretaryship, and Lady Blessington was always applied to. She, and she alone, could be a go-between.

It was well for her that her pen flowed on easily and fluently. In 1832, her *Conversations with Lord Byron* appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Then came *Grace Cassidy, or the Repealers*, and *Meredyth*—a novel of which Longman could only sell three hundred and eighty copies. *The Follies of Fashion* and *The Belle of the Season* were more successful, for in these all the notabilities of

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London were satirised under assumed names. *The Two Friends* and the *Victims of Society* are considered Lady Blessington's cleverest productions, though *The Confessions of an Elderly Lady* was also very popular and has gone through many editions. *The Governess*, a novel in three volumes, was followed by *The Idler in Italy* and *The Idler in France*.

These chatty journals show Lady Blessington at her best. She had little power of constructing a plot, and never let her heart out in her novels. She was afraid of the world. Her style is sketchy and graphic, but she never melts into passion, or rouses into dramatic energy. Her *Annuals*, *Books of Beauty*, and *Keepsakes* suited her capitally; their number was legion, she edited them well, and they brought her into contact with all the literary celebrities of the day. No one had a better eye for effect than she had—it was at once an instinct and an art. In Mr. N. P. Willis's *Pencillings by the Way*, we catch a glimpse of how she appeared to the American mind. The hour, ten o'clock in the evening; the place, the library, "lined with splendidly bound books and mirrors, with a deep window opening on Hyde Park."

"I found Lady Blessington alone," says Mr. Willis. "The picture, to my mind, was a very lovely one. A woman of remarkable beauty, half buried in a fauteuil of yellow satin, reading by a magnificent lamp, suspended from the arched ceiling. . . . She is no longer in *sa première jeunesse*, she looks something on the sunny side of forty (she was in reality on the shady side of forty). Her person is full, but has all the fineness of an admirable shape, and her complexion—an unusually fair skin, with very dark hair and eyebrows—is of even a girlish delicacy and freshness. Her dress of blue satin was cut low, and folded across her bosom in a way to show to advantage the round and sculpture-like curve and whiteness of a pair of exquisite shoulders, while

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her hair, dressed close to the head, and parted simply on her forehead with a rich *feronier* of turquoise, enveloped in clear outline a head with which it would be difficult to find a fault. Her features are regular, and her mouth, the most expressive of them, has a ripe fulness and freedom of play peculiar to the Irish physiognomy, and expressive of the most unsuspicious good humour. Add to this, a voice merry and sad by turns, but always musical, and manners of the most unpretending elegance, yet even more remarkable for their winning kindness, and you have the prominent traits of one of the most lovely and fascinating women I have ever seen."

Mr. Willis then describes one of Lady Blessington's receptions. The irresistible Count Alfred was, of course, there; the Duke de Richelieu; a German prince; a famous traveller; Mr. James Smith, of the *Rejected Addresses;* Sir Henry Bulwer; and, at twelve o'clock, the author of *Pelham* ran in with the joyous heartiness of a boy out of school. At a dinner soon afterwards, Mr. Willis sat opposite to Moore, "with a blaze of light on his Bacchus head," and Lady Blessington led the conversation with an ease and brilliancy for which she is remarkable. She was not only witty herself, but the cause of wit in others; she had a special talent for drawing out people. Though full of anecdote, she never talked too much herself, but seemed always anxious to make others show to the best advantage. Haydon, the painter, notes in his diary: "Went to Lady Blessington's in the evening. Everybody goes to Lady Blessington's. She has the first news of everything, and everybody seems delighted to tell her. No woman will be more missed. She is the centre of more talent and gaiety than any other woman in London." And yet no one was more talked about; heads were shaken and shoulders were shrugged whenever her name was mentioned. Let us see what a really charitable woman thought of her :—

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"I have no means of knowing," writes Mrs. S. C. Hall, "whether what the world said of this beautiful woman was true or false, but I am sure God intended her to be good, and there was a deep-seated good intent in whatever she did that came under my observation. Her sympathies were quick and cordial, her taste in literature womanly and refined. There was great satisfaction in writing for her, labours became pleasures from the importance she attached to every little request which, as an editor, she had a right to command. Her manners were singularly simple and graceful; it was to me an intense delight to look at beauty which, though I never saw it in its full bloom, was charming in its autumn time, and the Irish accent, and soft sweet Irish laugh, used to make my heart beat with the pleasures of memory. I always left her with an intense sense of enjoyment, and a perfect disbelief in anything I ever heard to her discredit. Her conversation was in good tune and taste, mingled with a great deal of humour, which escaped anything bordering on vulgarity. A tale of distress, or a touching anecdote, would at once suffuse her clear, intelligent eyes with tears, and her beautiful mouth would break into smiles and dimples at even the echo of wit or jest."

In the early part of 1836 Lady Blessington left Seamore Place for Gore House, Kensington. This house had formerly belonged to William Wilberforce, and Lady Blessington's removal to it provoked some witty verses from James Smith, which end as follows:—

> "The chains from which *he* freed the *blacks*,
> *She* rivets on the *whites*."

Count D'Orsay lived in a small house close by, but finally he took up his abode altogether at Gore House. By his help poor Lady Blessington was fast getting into a perfect swamp of debts. Calls for assistance poured in every day. The

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education of the children of her friends fell upon her. This one had to be fitted out for India, an old servant had to be pensioned off, literary people, poor artists, clamoured for aid, and Lady Blessington's warm heart could not say no. She laboured day and night at literary work, she longed to be free from debt, and was worried and harassed at not being able to pay bills, while large expenses were still going on without the means to meet them.

She got no sleep at night, but still her receptions went on, and *le beau comte* was as extravagant and as perfectly "got-up" as ever. When Louis Napoleon took refuge in England, the doors of Gore House were thrown open to him. Offers of money were made by generous Lady Blessington, and he was only too glad to join her parties to Greenwich and Richmond.

But the dark clouds broke at length. In vain did Lady Blessington sit at her desk. Expensive annuals were out of fashion, their day was over, and the public would not buy them at 10s. 6d. a-piece. By the failure of Charles Heath, the engraver, Lady Blessington lost £700, her jewels had been stolen, the famine was ravaging Ireland so that her jointure was not regularly paid, and her powers of invention seemed deserting her. The throne of this queen of society was indeed tottering to the dust; no longer could she rival Lady Holland and Lady Charleville. Her gay smile concealed a foreboding heart. The Count was in danger of arrest, and had to confine himself to the house and grounds. At last an execution was put in the house, the sheriff's officers took possession, and the Adonis of London had to fly with a single portmanteau from the scene of his triumphs. As for Lady Blessington, she was utterly worn out by the splendid misery of the last few years. She and her nieces had hardly joined Count D'Orsay in Paris, when the "costly and elegant effects of the Countess of Blessington" were advertised on every wall in staring capitals. The fauteuil in which the handsome count used to lounge so elegantly,

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sketches by Landseer and Maclise, innumerable likenesses of Lady Blessington, even her silver dressing-case, all were doomed to the hammer. The fashionable world strolled through the halls and drawing-rooms where they had often eaten and drunk. Some made jokes and jests, others pulled about the ornaments and poked the furniture. The arm-chair in which Lady Blessington generally sat was filled by a coarse, stout Jew busily engaged in pricing a marble hand extended on a book—a cast of Lady Blessington's own lovely fingers. Among the crowd moved the stalwart form of Thackeray; he went away with tears in his eyes, the only person that was really moved. In one of Lady Blessington's early sketches there is an account of an auction which might well have answered for her own. "Poor Mrs. B—— will give no more balls; I always thought how it would end." "The B——'s gave devilish good dinners though. Capital feeds, you could rely on a perfect *suprème de volaille*." "Where could you get such *cotelettes de pigeon à la champagne?*" "It is a pity that people who give such good dinners should be ruined."

Lady Blessington knew the world when she wrote these remarks, but perhaps she did not realize the full bitterness of the knowledge as she afterwards did. From all her so-called friends, from all her importunate dependents, she met with only the basest ingratitude. She still hoped on, however, but she did not survive the smash at Gore House much more than a month. She reached Paris the middle of April, 1849, and died very suddenly of heart disease early in June, in the fifty-ninth year of her age. The epitaph over her grave runs thus:—"Underneath is buried all that could be buried of a woman once most beautiful. She cultivated her genius with the greatest zeal, and fostered it in others with equal assiduity. The benefits she conferred on others, she could conceal, her talents not. Elegant in her hospitality to strangers, charitable to all, she retired to Paris in April, and there breathed her last June 4, 1849."

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Thus passed tragically away one of the cleverest and most brilliant *femmes de société* the world has known. All sorts of people owned her power ; Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton, Moore, Landor, had a real affection for her—she had the gift of pleasing. This gift, joined to her talents, her warm heart and generous disposition, made her path in life full of peril. But which of us can cast the first stone at her ? When we think of her early associations, when we remember the furnace through which she had to pass, is it any wonder that her principles were blighted and her faith in God weakened ? But her life was not utterly shipwrecked, and it left many a streak of light behind.

THE END.

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